

# JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

AND

## ENGLISH SOCIAL POLITICS

BY

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**To**  
**MY MOTHER**



## FOREWORD

THE renown of Joseph Chamberlain, the imperialist and tariff reformer, is established even beyond the confines of the British Empire. The student of affairs cannot but recognize the important contributions which he made in the cause of a greater imperial unity during the last decade and a half of his political career. But to some admirers of this statesman, the earlier passion of his municipal and parliamentary life, that of social reform, holds the greater interest. Added enthusiasm for this phase of his activities is aroused by the attention which statesmen in the more advanced governments devote to social problems today.

In this study I have desired primarily to place before the reader a brief survey of Chamberlain's life with special attention to the various influences destined to direct the successful manufacturer to the field of social politics. I have endeavoured to record in some detail his active participation both in the municipal affairs of Birmingham and in the various fields of parliamentary agitation and legislation pertinent to the cause of social reform, together with an attempt to estimate the significance of his contribution to his own generation and in a limited degree to the present social movement.

I have pursued my research in the United States at the Library of Columbia University and the New York Public Library; in England at the British Museum, the Royal Colonial Institute, the London School of Economics, and the reference library of Birmingham. To all those who so courteously and liberally assisted me in my labours I wish to extend my sincere appreciation. To the Right Honour-

ble Austen Chamberlain, who contributed illuminating information regarding his father's life, and to others who gave generously of their personal experiences with the statesman, I desire to express my gratitude.

The monograph has been prepared under the stimulating direction of Professors Carlton J. H. Hayes and Robert Livingston Schuyler of Columbia University, and to them I extend my especial thanks. The Reverend James Craig Buchanan, formerly of Edinburgh, Scotland, has kindly read the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions. To Dr. Kathleen Bruce, my colleague at Wheaton College, I am indebted for wise and generous assistance in the revision of the proof. Finally, I desire to express to my friend and fellow-student, Miss Myrtle Cline, my sincere appreciation for her untiring labour in the preparation of the manuscript, and to my friend, Miss Adeline Perkins, of the Public Library, Alliance, Ohio, my gratitude for her efficient service in the making of the index.

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## CHAPTER I

### JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, HIS HERITAGE AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

A STUDY of the social politics of Joseph Chamberlain brings into prominence at least two significant features of ancestral background. His paternal heritage brought to him, first of all, kinship with a middle-class family of integrity, shrewdness and industry—a family that had prospered and won distinction in its chosen field of activity. William Chamberlain, a native of Wiltshire, had emigrated to London in the middle of the eighteenth century, and in due time had gained recognition as a successful worker in leather. He became Master of the Cordwainer Company of that city in 1769, and, to the great credit of the family, that honour was successively bestowed upon his sons, William and Joseph, and his grandsons, William, Joseph and Richard. To the second of these grandsons was born on July 8, 1836, Joseph Chamberlain, the future statesman. In later years it was the pride of this son to relate that he belonged to the fourth generation of cordwainers who had practiced their occupation in the same house and under the same name for one hundred and twenty years.<sup>1</sup> From this worthy ancestry, distinguished for uprightness, energy and courage, came the proper initiative for a life which was to be devoted in no small degree to the welfare of his fellow-men.

The second trait of importance in his ancestral heri-

<sup>1</sup> London *Times*, May 14, 1896, Jan. 20, 1902. This paper is hereafter referred to as *Times*. Marris, N. Murrell, *The Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, the Man and the Statesman* (New York, 1900), pp. 4, 5.

tage was determined by the religious integrity displayed by his forefathers two hundred years before. Through his paternal grandmother, Chamberlain was directly connected with Richard Serjeant of Kidderminster, who refused to take the tests imposed by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. The significance of this connexion appears in the words which the eminent statesman spoke with so much pride in 1884: "I can claim descent from one of the two thousand ejected ministers, who in the time of the Stuarts, left home and work and profit, rather than accept a state-made creed which it was sought to force upon them."<sup>1</sup> The Chamberlain family not only gave its allegiance to the dissenting cause, but it also allied itself with the most radical sect of the Nonconformists—the Unitarians. This fact was of consequence, since even in this period Unitarians and Quakers were especially interested in social reform.

Politically, Joseph Chamberlain, Senior, was identified with the Liberal party. Though he had taken no prominent part in politics, his sympathies as a Unitarian interested him in all measures directed toward the legal liberation of the dissenting sects, and his intelligent outlook upon life about him made him keenly conscious of the problems of his city and state.<sup>2</sup> The influence of the home, therefore, as well as that of the chapel, impressed upon young Joseph his responsibility to the life of the community. In referring to the early influences of his father's life, Mr. Austen Chamberlain has remarked that his grandfather considered it a duty to devote a certain part of his time to public affairs, and that he impressed upon his children the importance of this principle.<sup>3</sup> The public career of Joseph

<sup>1</sup> Marris, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Lucy, Henry W., ed., *Speeches of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain* (London, 1885), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Marris, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 15; *Birmingham Daily Post*, Sept. 21, 1868. This paper is hereafter referred to as *Post*.

<sup>3</sup> Conversation of the author with Mr. Austen Chamberlain, July 2, 1924.



Chamberlain showed that he had absorbed this wholesome teaching.

The school days of the lad extended over the brief period of eight years. After one year at Miss Pace's school near his home in Camberwell, he was sent to Canonbury Square, where he remained until the age of fourteen. In 1850 he was entered at University College School in Gower Street—a secondary institution connected with the University of London, which had from its beginning been distinctly non-sectarian. Though the teaching was absolutely unsectarian, the dissenting element was present, since among young Chamberlain's masters as well as his fellow students were those of the Unitarian faith. During his two years at this school, he proved himself a brilliant student, attaining the first place in his mathematical studies. His formal education ended at the close of the two years at the preparatory school.<sup>1</sup> Years later, in company with John Morley, he visited Oxford. After his companion had taken him around the garden walks, antique gates, and "massy piles of old munificence", Chamberlain said to him, "Oh, how I wish I could have had a training in this place!" Quite different might have been his career could that wish have been fulfilled, but at the time of his youth the older universities with their conservative traditions were closed to dissenters. Yet, Morley informs us that his friend, in spite of his lack of university training, "came to be more widely read in books worth reading than most men in public life, and there was no limit to his interest in art, modern history, imagina-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Nov. 6, 1902; Marris, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-19. In 1902, Chamberlain returned to University College School to deliver a memorial address in honour of its loyal members who had given their lives in the Boer War. On that occasion he referred to his profitable years of study there and mentioned receiving a prize from the Lord Mayor just fifty years before. *Times*, Nov. 6, 1902.

tive letters, with all that they import in politics".<sup>1</sup> During his young manhood, his reading included the works of Rousseau, Comte and Karl Marx.<sup>2</sup>

At the age of sixteen, having attained his educational foundation, Joseph Chamberlain turned to the hard school of business, since it was decided that he should learn the trade of cordwaining. He was employed among the workmen in his father's house of business in Milk Street. Of this industrial group it has been said that shoemakers, like tailors, are proverbially strong politicians, mostly of the radical or socialistic type. The two years which the young man spent among these "strong politicians" gave him an opportunity to learn much of workmen's politics, and provided an experience which was afterwards of use to him when he began to study legislative questions from the workman's point of view.<sup>3</sup>

In 1854, his business and social connexions with the Metropolis ended, and he began his long and happy associations with the Midland city of Birmingham, where he became one of the most honoured citizens. The change of residence was brought about when Joseph Chamberlain, Senior, was induced by his brother-in-law, Joseph Nettlefold, to invest a sum of money in an American patent for wood screws, of which the Nettlefold firm had bought the English rights. After the purchase a son from each side of the house came to Birmingham to take up the work. For twenty years Chamberlain was associated with the firm, and during that period, largely owing to his ability, the company was increasingly successful. From the very beginning he showed remarkable business aptitude, having a capacity for detail as well as remarkable foresight.

<sup>1</sup> Morley, John Viscount, *Recollections*, 2 vols. (London, 1917), vol. i, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Marris, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Financial success, however, was not his only consideration; the welfare of his employees received his earnest attention. His close association with the factory workers revealed to him their educational deficiencies, with the result that his efforts were soon displayed in a practical way by the establishment of a club with a night school attached, in which he himself taught various subjects. A debating club was also organized as a part of the work; here especially Chamberlain showed a keen interest by his constant attendance.<sup>1</sup>

The young manufacturer was at the same time entering into the life of the community. In November, 1854, he joined a flourishing debating club, which has been known since 1885 as the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society. Though it was in no sense a political organization, it was no doubt an important factor in shaping his political future, since it brought him into contact with the keen minds of the community and directed his attention to topics of varying character. Chamberlain's interest in the Society was shown in the various offices he held; he was treasurer in 1858, secretary in 1859 and 1860, vice-president in 1861, and president in 1863 and 1866.<sup>2</sup>

From debating to politics was a short step. According to a Birmingham contemporary, the discoverer of Chamberlain was Francis Schnadhorst, the future organizing chief of the Liberal party. Schnadhorst had known Chamberlain as a brilliant debater at the Birmingham and Edg-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39, 45; *Searchlight of Greater Birmingham*, Nov. 13, 1913, pp. 28, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Marris, *op. cit.*, p. 49; *Post*, Dec. 10, 1868. At a meeting held June 26, 1869, George Dawson spoke on the "advisability of discussing all great questions at this period when party fidelity and party leadership were so greatly shaken." The Society had at this time abandoned the timid old superstition that religious and political questions should be avoided lest evil should ensue. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1869.

baston Debating Society. Towards the end of 1868 he invited him to speak at a meeting at Carr's Lane Chapel. The masterly and eloquent speech here delivered created an extraordinary impression upon the audience.<sup>1</sup> Three years earlier he had enrolled as a member of the newly formed Liberal Association of Birmingham; and in the parliamentary contest of 1868, after the association had had a complete reorganization to include representatives of the workingmen-householders, Schnadhorst appealed to Chamberlain for support. Liberal success followed in the election of their three candidates—Bright, Dixon and Muntz.<sup>2</sup> When national education and the disestablishment of the Irish Church were made prominent issues in the new Gladstonian Government, Chamberlain's interest was keenly aroused. To the Irish cause he gave his earnest support;<sup>3</sup> to the establishment of a national system of education which should be free, unsectarian and compulsory he devoted his efficient services as chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Education League, the organization which gave expression to the radical demands of his adopted city and ultimately made its influence felt throughout the entire country.<sup>4</sup>

The enthusiasm and ability displayed by Chamberlain in national and civic problems brought to some of his townspeople a realization of the services which might be rendered by such a citizen as a councillor in their own community. He was accordingly requested to stand as councillor for St. Paul's Ward and was returned unopposed in November,

<sup>1</sup> *Searchlight of Greater Birmingham*, Nov. 13, 1913, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Nov. 26, 1868.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain's first speech in the Birmingham Town Hall was on the Irish Church Bill. *Post*, June 15, 1869.

<sup>4</sup> Adams, Francis, *History of the Elementary School Contest in England* (London, 1882), pp. 192-234. Adams was secretary of the National Education League.

1869. Birmingham stood in need of such capable, high-minded administrators, and, as will be seen in a study of his municipal career, his capacity for rendering the highest services to his city led in 1873 to his election as mayor, an office to which he was twice reelected. That he might devote his entire attention to public affairs, the Mayor in 1874 severed his connexion with the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain, which had by this time acquired great prosperity.<sup>1</sup> In his new field, the successful man of business displayed rare executive ability and audacious initiative in carrying through successfully various schemes of improvement. His activity in educational affairs won for him membership on the first School Board of Birmingham, which was organized in accordance with the Education Act of 1870. With the ascendancy of his National Education League colleagues in 1873, he attained the chairmanship of the Board, which he held for three years.<sup>2</sup> His excellent programme in all phases of municipal affairs together with his personal activity placed the city of Birmingham in the forefront among progressive corporations of England and opened to the social reformer a much desired parliamentary career.

During the entire period of his municipal activities, Chamberlain, as chairman of the National Education League, continued to take an active part in the educational controversy of the nation, occasioned by Forster's Education Act of 1870. Since all his educational ideas of the early 'seventies were affected by his dissenting faith, it was as a Nonconformist politician that he was first to win national recognition. As a result of his participation in the

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1873-1874, 1874-1875, 1875-1876; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 63 (1895), pp. 904-912; Marris, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Dec. 4, 1873; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 249, 298. Regarding the National Education League, see *infra*, pp. 113-134 *passim*.

Nonconformist Conference at Manchester in January, 1872, when the demand was made that the creed of the League be accepted by the leaders of the Liberal party, Chamberlain made his entrance into national politics.<sup>1</sup> When the Liberal leaders failed to meet the demands of the Nonconformists and dissension was brewing within their party, the Radical leader of Birmingham dared to set forth in the *Fortnightly Review* of September, 1873, a programme of "Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools, and Free Labour" for the unification of the warring factions.<sup>2</sup> The same programme he placed before the voters of Sheffield a few months later when he had been induced to stand as the Radical parliamentary candidate for that constituency. In presenting his policy, he announced that he wished to go to Parliament as a representative of workingmen and dissenters, not as a representative of wealth, which was already sufficiently well represented.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately for his own city, he met defeat in the contest; for what Sheffield lost Birmingham gained. Upon the retirement of George Dixon in 1876, Joseph Chamberlain entered upon his remarkable parliamentary course of thirty years' active service as a representative of his adopted city. Just as he had successfully put into operation in Birmingham a policy for improving the social welfare of his fellow townsmen, so his aim as a member of Parliament became the expansion of that policy in behalf of his countrymen at large. The programme which he unfolded in his first election address to his constituents was such as to stir the enthusiasm of all Radicals who were proud to recognize him as their chief. The extension of the franchise, licensing reform, advanced

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, Charles W., ed., *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, 2 vols. (Boston and New York, 1914), vol. i, pp. 14-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 20 (1873), pp. 287-302.

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, Jan. 2, 1874.

legislation in education, disestablishment and land reform were, in his opinion, all pressing needs of the day.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain's political interest in national affairs prior to his entrance into Parliament had resulted in the formation of warm friendships with men of prominence, among whom that with the London Radical, Sir Charles Dilke, held the first place. This friendship began in 1869 when Dilke served as chairman of the London branch of the newly formed Education League, of which Chamberlain was national chairman. Dilke was already a parliamentary member for the city of London, so that he was able to exert his efforts in the House of Commons in behalf of those causes in which his Birmingham friend was interested. After Chamberlain entered Parliament in 1876, the two Radicals worked in friendly cooperation, the result of which was destined to influence Liberal policy for a decade. The significance of this dual alliance is aptly summed up by the House of Commons' jest that B. C. now meant "Before Chamberlain" and A. D., "Anno Dilke".<sup>2</sup>

A second friendship which stood the strain of all political divergences was that with John Morley. Brigadier-General John H. Morgan in his interesting comments on Lord Morley has written: "He had one intimate companion of his own age and generation, and with the death of that companion he never had another who occupied quite the same position. That companion was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain". This remarkable friendship, according to Morley's delightful account in his *Recollections*, began in 1873 on the occasion of a small meeting held to protest against a section of Forster's Education Act. From this time on, the two men "fell into an understanding which soon de-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, June 28, 1876; Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Gwynn, Stephen and Tuckwell, Gertrude M., *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke*, 2 vols. (New York, 1917), vol. i, pp. 94-98, 164, 317.

veloped into sworn alliance and much more". Chamberlain's contributions to the *Fortnightly Review* during the 'seventies and early 'eighties may without doubt be attributed to the close cooperation between the Birmingham Radical and the prominent editor of the *Review*. During the thirteen years from 1873 to 1886 when these two statesmen "lived the life of brothers", important developments in Radical policy doubtless were formulated under their influence.<sup>1</sup>

During the first four years of Chamberlain's parliamentary experience while the Conservative Government was in power, he proved his ability in debate, intervening especially in the discussions on those subjects which had claimed his attention during his municipal career — local government, education, temperance reform and other phases of social politics. On the occasion of his severe attack upon the old-time institution of flogging in the army, he found himself in company with the much-derided Irish leader, Parnell, and at the same time in uncordial relationship with Lord Hartington, to whom he boldly referred as the "late leader of the Liberal party".<sup>2</sup> Outside of Parliament, he was acquiring prestige by his able services in the reorganization of the Liberal party. A movement was initiated by the Birmingham Liberals for uniting the various associations

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, vol. 221 (1925), p. 486; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 147-163; Morgan, John H., *John, Viscount Morley, An Appreciation and Some Reminiscences* (Boston and New York, 1924), pp. 19, 20, 181. Mr. J. A. Spender in referring to the partnership between Morley and Chamberlain writes of their joint use of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in attacking W. E. Forster for his policy of coercion in Ireland and later in running the unauthorized programme against the Whigs of the 1880 Cabinet. Spender, J. A., *The Public Life*, 2 vols. (London, 1925), vol. ii, pp. 96, 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., vol. 247 (1879), pp. 45-49, 1586, 1806, 1807. The *Parliamentary Debates* are hereafter referred to as *Hansard*.



throughout the country into a federation. In 1877, Gladstone paid his first official visit to Birmingham. After an able speech by the great statesman, Chamberlain, as president of the local association, proposed a resolution for federation on the principle of popular election. Aroused by the accusations of Conservative opponents as well as by the unsympathetic attitude of some within the Liberal ranks, Chamberlain in two *Fortnightly* articles defended the so-called caucus, which was to prove so effective an instrument in the next election.<sup>1</sup>

When Liberal victory was assured in 1880 and Gladstone again became Prime Minister, the Radical element could not be ignored. In a letter of Chamberlain to Dilke, in which he expressed the desire that each support the other for positions in the Cabinet, he wrote: "The victory which has just been won is the victory of the Radicals. Gladstone and the Caucus have triumphed all along the line, and it is the strong, definite, decided policy which has commended itself, and not the halting, half-hearted, armchair business." When Dilke alone was first offered a seat in the Cabinet, he refused office unless something were done for Chamberlain, and eventually the offer of the presidency of the Board of Trade with a seat in the Cabinet was accepted by Chamberlain while his loyal friend was appointed Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.<sup>2</sup> The Radical member from Birmingham was no longer a free lance; he was a responsible member of a Government in which the Whig element was stronger than the Radical. Chamberlain accepted the situation and realized that each should be prepared to make some concession that the will of the majority

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, June 1, 1877; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 28 (1877), pp. 126-134, vol. 30 (1878), pp. 721-741.

<sup>2</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-309; Spender, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 82, 83.

might be carried out.<sup>1</sup> Office, therefore, proved a moderating force and though at times his zeal for a more radical policy was not appreciated by his more conservative colleagues, the peace was kept by concession on both sides. At the Board of Trade, he put through substantial legislation, though this phase of parliamentary affairs did not absorb all his energies. He gave his support to the cause of electoral reform both in and out of Parliament, and also made an effort to assist in the solution of the Irish problem. The remedy, he believed, was not to be found in coercion, but through land reform and an extension of the rights of local self-government. In May, 1885, he presented a scheme to the Cabinet for the accomplishment of the latter plan, and this plan, which was approved by Parnell, was accepted by all the eight Ministers in the House of Commons except Lord Hartington; unfortunately only one peer, Lord Granville, favoured it.<sup>2</sup> As a result no further action was taken, and the solution of the great question was postponed to what proved to be a less opportune time for settlement — after the Irish forces were materially increased in power. It was not long ere the Liberal Government gave way to a Conservative Ministry, and shortly afterwards Parliament was dissolved in favour of a new election in which the newly-enfranchised rural labouring classes were to take part.

From the very beginning of 1885, Chamberlain had anticipated with enthusiasm the great opportunities for an advancement of the social welfare of the people that would result from this election in which the masses of England would have a right to participate. His views which were set forth in numerous speeches, popularly referred to as "the

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, John, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols. (New York, 1911), vol. iii, pp. 193, 194.

unauthorized programme", revealed his radicalism at its zenith. Free education, a revision of local taxation, land reform and local self-government were some of the urgent problems waiting for settlement.<sup>1</sup> In July, 1885, *The Radical Programme*, comprising a series of articles formerly published in the *Fortnightly Review*, made its appearance—with a sympathetic preface by Chamberlain. Though he did not pledge himself to all the proposals contained in the articles, he welcomed their appearance and commended them to the careful and impartial judgment of his fellow Radicals. He believed that the stage of agitation had passed and the time for action had come.<sup>2</sup>

A thrill of hope that a new order of social welfare was about to be inaugurated was aroused in the breasts of the poor and distressed, but to the leader of the Liberal party many of Chamberlain's unauthorized proposals were often a source of considerable embarrassment. From less sympathetic friends and Conservative opponents came more or less caustic remarks; by one critic his proposals were characterized as "a distinct hoisting of the flag of State Socialism".<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the Irish Nationalists, emboldened by their prospective increase of power in the new Parliament as a result of enlarged franchise and redistribution, were offering their support to either party in return for future concessions to the Irish people. No longer to be appeased by

<sup>1</sup> Most of the speeches of the unauthorized programme are found in Lucy's collection of Chamberlain's speeches.

<sup>2</sup> *The Radical Programme*, with a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M. P. (London, 1885).

<sup>3</sup> Milner, Rt. Hon. Viscount and Others, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (London, 1914), *loc. cit.*, Macdonald, J. Ramsay, "Mr. Chamberlain as a Social Reformer," pp. 164, 165; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, pp. 113, 174; *Saturday Review*, vol. 59 (1885), p. 568; *Spectator*, vol. 58 (1885), p. 608.

such a local government scheme as Chamberlain had presented a few months before to the Gladstonian Government, Parnell advanced a new programme providing for a separate and independent Parliament endowed with extensive powers. The response of the Radical leader to this demand was explicit: "Speaking for myself, I say that if these, and these alone, are the terms on which Mr. Parnell's support is to be obtained, I will not enter into competition for it". As the campaign progressed, his conception of a Liberal policy was to force the pace on social questions and leave Ireland alone.<sup>1</sup>

When the election resulted in the return to Parliament of eighty-six Home Rulers in whose control was the balance of power, it was clear that the Irish question could not be ignored. The Nationalists soon realized that the Conservatives would make no bid for their support; accordingly they were quite ready to trust to the apparently sympathetic attitude of the Liberal leader, and overthrow the tottering Government. By the first of February, Gladstone was again in office with the prospect of a great struggle ahead of him. Chamberlain accepted the presidency of the Local Government Board, but he did so with reluctance, in view of the possibility that Gladstone might be willing to allow greater concession in Home Rule than he himself could sanction. In his letter accepting the office, he explained that though he recognized the necessity of an attempt to satisfy the wishes of the Irish people, he did not find it possible to reconcile the existing conditions with the establishment of a National Legislative body sitting in Dublin; he preferred "an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on the basis of a more limited scheme of Local Government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, Joseph, *Home Rule and the Irish Question* (London, 1887), p. 33; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 183.

Land, and perhaps, also, of the Education Question". His chief accorded to him "unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection" on any scheme which might ultimately be allowed. When the outlines of the Land Purchase Bill and of the Home Rule Bill were finally presented to the Cabinet on March 13 without previous discussion, Chamberlain found, as he had anticipated, that the Prime Minister's proposals went far beyond what he was willing to concede. He contended that the scheme was one for separation and not for Home Rule. His resignation was immediately placed before Gladstone and was accepted a few days later.<sup>1</sup>

When the Home Rule Bill and Land Purchase Bill were finally introduced into Parliament in April, the opposition of the Radical leader remained unshaken, with the result that upon him and his colleague, John Bright, was placed the main responsibility for the rejection of the measure by the ninety-three seceding Liberal Unionists.<sup>2</sup> At this time there is seen the beginning of a new era in Chamberlain's career. His zeal for social reform was now superseded by what he considered a higher purpose—the preservation of the Union. That this might be accomplished, he found himself allied with his former Whig opponents, Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, and the Tory party under the leadership of Lord Salisbury whom he had attacked so vehemently on many occasions. During the Home Rule struggle of 1886 and down to the second struggle of 1893, one therefore finds the dominant note in his political action to be the maintenance of the Union and imperial supremacy.<sup>3</sup>

When efforts for conciliation with the Liberals definitely came to an end with the Round Table Conference of 1887,

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 304 (1886), pp. 1184 *et seq.*, 1813-1816.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, pp. 330-341.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, Speeches of 1886-1887.

Chamberlain dared to hope that the fulfillment of his social policy might be accomplished in cooperation with the Tories. The Dartford speech of Lord Randolph Churchill and subsequent speeches by other members of the Conservative party, had, he believed, sounded the death knell of the reactionary Tory policy. Thus encouraged, he was emboldened to place before his allies at least a portion of his earlier programme. Land reform, the extension of local government, the increase of facilities for primary education, and a revision of taxation were in 1887 brought before the Government for consideration.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, Chamberlain realized that concessions had to be granted by Liberal Unionists as well as by Tories if a working programme were to be developed. The acceptance of such a situation he publicly stated in a speech at Glasgow in February, 1889: "In my opinion every Liberal who places the Union first of all is bound to make some sacrifices for what will be his paramount object. He is bound to make some sacrifices of extreme views. He is bound to put aside for a time some of his cherished ambitions. This is an elementary condition of all combinations whatsoever."<sup>2</sup> Though Liberals looked upon the sacrifices of the former Radical as indeed great and humiliating ones, it must be admitted that the Conservative Government of 1886-1892 in its legislation for local government, free education, provision for allotments and Irish land purchase had a record of accomplishment in social reform which would have been impossible of attainment prior to the formation of the Liberal Unionist party. And in fact, the new Conservative policy was by no means favourably received by all members of the party. There were many who felt that too high a price had been paid for the alliance in behalf of the Union and

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, p. 368; *Times*, June 15, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1889.

that the Conservative party in its subservience to the former Radical had ceased to be conservative in practice.<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1887, Chamberlain was invited by Lord Salisbury to become chief British plenipotentiary on the North American Fisheries Commission. The acceptance of the honour by Chamberlain removed him for a time from active political strife, and furthermore, participation in the foreign negotiations enlarged his interest in imperial affairs and deepened his insight. Though an equitable agreement was arranged by the Commission, the United States Senate refused to ratify it. However, a *modus vivendi* which had been provided by the plenipotentiaries, pending the ratification by the Senate, was brought into immediate operation and it served to regulate successfully the relationship of the two countries.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, Chamberlain's services in this capacity were a means of establishing more cordial relations with the Conservative party. But regardless of this amicable spirit, the Liberal Unionists continued to maintain their separate existence as a political party. Even as late as November, 1891, their leader explained that though he neither desired nor looked for reunion with his old party, he had no notion of a fusion between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives. He considered that as an independent party, it was wielding a strong force in politics, and that in that position it had accomplished a great deal more during the preceding five years than it could have done within the ranks of the Conservative party.<sup>3</sup>

In the following year a somewhat closer bond of union was established. Prior to 1892, Chamberlain and his party had been working only in sympathetic cooperation with the

<sup>1</sup> Brooks, Rev. George, *Mr. Chamberlain's New Programme* (Suffolk, 1892).

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, Nov. 28, 1891.

Government in power. When in that year the Gladstone Ministry was again restored, Liberal Unionists and Tories together occupied the Opposition benches. Chamberlain's power, even before this change, had been further augmented when he succeeded to the Liberal Unionist leadership of the House of Commons upon Lord Hartington's advancement to the House of Lords as the eighth duke of Devonshire.<sup>1</sup> During the three-year period of Liberal rule, the Irish question again held the primacy and the new leader of the Liberal Unionists in the House was untiring in his severe denunciation of Gladstone's somewhat modified Home Rule measure.<sup>2</sup> Though Home Rule held sway until its defeat by the House of Lords in 1893, the agitation for social reform was increasing. In the election campaign of 1892, Chamberlain had especially emphasized this feature as an alternative to the Liberal proffer of Home Rule and the Newcastle Programme.<sup>3</sup> The attempt of Gladstone's Government to deal with certain phases of social reform was accepted by Chamberlain as defensible in principle,

<sup>1</sup> Holland, Bernard, *The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, 2 vols. (London and New York, 1911), vol. ii, p. 210. Henry Lucy has left this comment on Chamberlain's position in the House of Commons in 1893: "The most striking feature in the Session has been the position achieved by Mr. Chamberlain... Mr. Balfour has been the titular leader of the Opposition; Mr. Chamberlain has ordered the plan of campaign and has led in person all the principal attacks on the enemy's entrenchment. Mr. Balfour has reigned; Mr. Chamberlain has governed." Lucy, Henry W., *Peeps at Parliament* (London, 1903), p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 8 (1893), pp. 1717-1744, vol. 13, pp. 1549 *et seq.*, vol. 14, pp. 1236 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, June 10 and 18, July 4, 5 and 9, 1892. The Newcastle Programme which was adopted by the Liberals in October, 1891, included the following items: the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales and the Church of Scotland, local veto on the sale of liquor, abolition of plural voting, extension of the Employer's Liability Act, and restriction of the hours of labour. *Times*, Oct. 2 and 3, 1891.



though he was far from satisfied with the application of these principles in the bills which were introduced.<sup>1</sup> Nearly nine years of cooperation with the Tory party were quite sufficient to prepare Chamberlain for active participation in the Unionist Government formed upon the fall of Lord Rosebery's Ministry in 1895. In addition, it had prepared him for a very different field of service from that which might be expected of a Radical social reformer. Yet a study of his career reveals his keen interest in imperial affairs even in the pre-parliamentary days. Years before his active entrance into municipal or national politics, he had opposed the election of John Bright for Parliament because of Bright's Quaker views on foreign policy. At the time of his own membership in Gladstone's second Ministry, he had been jokingly referred to as "almost the greatest Jingo" in the Cabinet.<sup>2</sup>

The American visit of 1888 gave him a greater appreciation of the value and responsibility of imperial possessions, a greater pride in the restless energy and dauntless courage which had created the Empire. He began to consider the idea of a scheme of federation which would strengthen both colonies and mother-country.<sup>3</sup> Contact with Tory friends, ever faithful in their devotion to the Empire, must also have been another factor in increasing his belief in the importance of this ever-broadening sphere. He therefore accepted the Colonial Secretaryship—offered him at this time—with "a firm belief in the British Empire" and belief in the British race as "the greatest of the governing races the world had ever seen". Hitherto the

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Dec. 15, 1893, Jan. 30, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan, George Macaulay, *The Life of John Bright* (London and New York, 1913), p. 280; Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmund, *Life of Granville*, 2 vols. (London, 1905), vol. ii, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 317-324.

Colonial Office had occupied a position of subordination to the Foreign Office, but Chamberlain's eight years of efficient service at this Cabinet post, with its extraordinary responsibilities occasioned by the South African difficulties which culminated in the Boer War, gave added importance to the Colonial Department. Though the activities of the Colonial Secretary in relation to various phases of the South African situation created an occasion for bitter denunciation from his political opponents, any fair-minded person is obliged to recognize his constructive statesmanship in the upbuilding of a more vigorous colonial policy and in the creation of a new spirit of sympathetic cooperation at the Colonial Office. When Chamberlain's eight years of grappling with the imperial problem led to his proposal for the reversal of England's free trade policy and the adoption of a preferential tariff as the most effective means of bringing about a closer commercial union of the Empire, a new controversy that is not yet settled was introduced into the political arena. It resulted eventually in the resignation of the Colonial Secretary in September, 1903, in order that, unimpeded, he might expound his new theory. Later this proved an important factor in making possible the return of the Liberals to power in 1905.<sup>1</sup>

One might infer that Chamberlain's entrance into imperial politics would have removed him entirely from the field of domestic affairs. This inference, however, is not warranted. Certain pledges for social reform made in the election campaign of 1895 could not be ignored. He took an active part in the initiating and carrying through of various laws which were of vital significance to the labouring classes, though it was noticeable that he no longer in-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 317, 318; Jeyes, S. H., *Mr. Chamberlain, His Life and Public Career*, 2 vols. (London, 1904), vol. i, pp. 330-335, vol. ii, pp. 298-303.

tervened in debates on social reform subjects which had formerly engrossed his attention.<sup>1</sup> With the increasing burden of imperial responsibilities resulting from the Boer War, Chamberlain withdrew from the field of domestic activity, until finally his only remaining contribution is found in his effort to improve domestic conditions through the medium of a successful imperial policy.

Before the great imperial statesman and social reformer was able to prove to his fellow-countrymen the truth of his conviction, physical infirmities came upon him, and just at the close of his seventy eventful years, he was obliged to withdraw from the political arena in which he had played so conspicuous a part.

It will be the purpose of this study to present in the following chapters the various social reform activities of Chamberlain, first within his adopted city of Birmingham, and, second, in the larger sphere of parliamentary affairs, with special consideration of the changes affected by the exigencies of party politics.

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, Henry W., *A Diary of the Unionist Parliament* (1895-1900), (London, 1901), p. 108. See *infra*, pp. 261-267.

## CHAPTER II

### CHAMBERLAIN AS A MUNICIPAL REFORMER

Though the English have built the greatest towns the world has ever seen, they have always exhibited a singular inability to organize, or even to understand, the true municipal life. What they have established have been huge agglomerations of houses, rather than cities, and throughout history, they have shown little or no appreciation of the sentiments and ideas which were centered in the *polis* of the Greeks. . . . The only place in England which appears to form a striking exception to this rule is Birmingham. . . . What that sentiment exactly is, it is difficult to define, but it is none the less recognizable in a concrete instance. Its main feature is the emotional bonds that unite the citizens and make them feel that they stand in a social relationship to each other different from that which they occupy in regard to the rest of the world. They have one and all given themselves up to an ideal—the advancement, moral and material, of their city.—*The Spectator*, January 3, 1891.

This tribute paid by *The Spectator* to the city of Birmingham in the year 1891 could not have been offered to that municipality twenty years earlier. But fortunately for its citizens, the Corporation during the last third of the century came under the domination of a group of public-spirited leaders who had the vision of a new Birmingham, and who acted on the theory that a strong and able Town Council might do even more to improve the conditions of life in the town than Parliament itself. It is true that men of ability and of considerable social position had already discharged municipal duties prior to Joseph Chamberlain's

election to the Council in 1869, but it is also true that many of the official group did not maintain the highest ideals of citizenship.<sup>1</sup> The new representative of St. Paul's Ward was foremost among those who were active in inaugurating a policy of reform. He appealed in private to men of ability who cared nothing for public life, and pointed out how much they might do for the town if they would enter the Council. "He dreamed dreams and saw visions of what Birmingham might become, and resolved that he, for his part, would do his utmost to fulfill them."<sup>2</sup>

Within Chamberlain's own home one finds a picture of this development of the spirit of civic and social reform, as recorded by his friend, John Morley. There in an "atmosphere of strenuous and disinterested public spirit" was often gathered a remarkable circle, including Dr. Vince, a "clear-headed Baptist divine", Dr. Crosskey, a "broad-minded Unitarian divine", George Dawson, "the friend of Mazzini, Carlyle, Emerson", Mr. Bunce, the able editor of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, who "knew how to temper zeal and warmth with wholesome judgment, and keep them awake to quiet currents of popular opinion", Jesse Collings, "that unselfish and whole-hearted man, with his broad human sympathy", and then "before them all in strength of calibre" the Congregational leader, R. W. Dale.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Searchlight of Greater Birmingham*, Nov. 13, 1913, contained a series of articles on various phases of the career of Joseph Chamberlain. The local references are of special value. In "Recollections of Chamberlain and His Times" by R. S. Kirk is the following comment: "The personnel of the old Town Council was remarkable. The leading lights were very homely, old-fashioned citizens who used to meet at the Old Wogdman in Easy Row to arrange the business, so that at Council meetings time was not lost."

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong, Richard A., *Henry William Crosskey, His Life and Work*, *loc. cit.*, Dale, R. W., "Life and Work in Birmingham" (Birmingham, 1895), pp. 248-250.

<sup>3</sup> Morley, John, *Recollections*, 2 vols. (London, 1917), vol. ii, pp. 148-150.

A larger group with whom Chamberlain was associated were assembled for the daily luncheon<sup>1</sup> or a social hour at the Arts Club, an organization instituted in 1873 for the purpose "of facilitating the daily social intercourse of gentlemen professing Liberal opinions, who are engaged or interested in the public life of Birmingham".<sup>2</sup> During the seven years of its existence, it was "the source of all the Liberal politics of Birmingham"; in fact, it was "the very soul of the Liberal Association" until its dissolution in 1880 with the advent of the Birmingham Liberal Club.<sup>3</sup>

When Joseph Chamberlain entered the Council as a representative of St. Paul's Ward in 1869, the outlook was by no means encouraging. As he himself said almost at the close of his municipal career, "During the first part of that period I was entirely opposed to those who were then in power".<sup>4</sup> Councillors Avery, Collings, and Harris united with him, and together they formed a small party known as "the Municipal Reformers".<sup>5</sup> What may be regarded as a preliminary skirmish between "the Municipal Reformers" and the old-fashioned majority occurred in the first year of Chamberlain's councillorship over the question of putting into operation the Workshops Act of 1867. The three objects of the Act were to abolish "premature labour", to improve the sanitary conditions of the working class

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in conversation with the writer, in July, 1924, referred to these daily luncheons as an important feature in the discussion of municipal politics.

<sup>2</sup> Birmingham Art Club, *Reports*, 1873-74 (Birmingham, 1874), p. 9. Other members besides those mentioned above were John Henry Chamberlain, the architect, Arthur Chamberlain and Richard Chamberlain (brothers of Joseph Chamberlain), Samuel Timmins, William Harris, George Dixon, M. P., William Kenrick, C. E. Mathews, G. S. Mathews, J. S. Wright. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, Wright, *Life of George Dawson* (Birmingham, 1905), p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> *Post*, Oct. 23, 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

who came under the measure, and to give them increased educational facilities. Regardless of these praiseworthy considerations, the Council, after debate on the measure, had not seen fit to put it into operation; accordingly, in August, 1870, the discussion was reopened by a resolution that the Borough Inspection Committee be directed to bring up a scheme for putting the provisions of the Act into operation. In seconding the resolution, Chamberlain showed the desirability of such a procedure. His only censure of the measure was that the provisions did not go far enough; he questioned whether the objects the measure sought to attain, would be accomplished. At any rate, he emphatically stated his opposition to excessive hours of labour which he considered not only injurious to the workpeople but unprofitable to the employer as well. In relation to the provision requiring attendance at school of children until thirteen years of age, for at least ten hours a week, he felt very decidedly that the Act was inadequate. He also refuted the argument advanced that children turned away from factories had brought an increase of juvenile crime. The enforcement of the measure by the Corporation he showed to be important in relation to local government; lack of enforcement of parliamentary legislation he considered to be a strong argument against it. As a result of his efforts and those of his colleagues, the resolution was finally passed in August, 1870. The following spring, a recommendation was made by the Committee that the Council appoint two inspectors to carry out the Act. The proposal was accepted by the Council in spite of considerable opposition.<sup>1</sup>

A marked change, however, occurred in 1871 when the progressive party won an important victory by the appointment of the Sewage Inquiry Committee.<sup>2</sup> The attention of

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Aug. 3 and 17, 1870, Apr. 5, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> Bunce, John Thackray, *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*,

the Council was necessarily focused upon the sewage problem by a renewed injunction by Sir Charles Adderley to restrain the Corporation from the further pollution of the River Tame, and by various other complaints relative to other unsatisfactory arrangements for sewage disposal. At this juncture of affairs, the Public Works Committee was vested with authority to inquire into and report upon available land, to which could be applied for agricultural purposes the sewage of the Borough. In June, 1871, the Public Works Committee presented an elaborate report embodying its "conclusions". The purchase of from two thousand to twenty-five hundred acres of land for the purification of the sewage, and a scheme of operations in connexion therewith, entailing an estimated expenditure of £275,000, were recommended. Such an extensive proposal aroused strenuous opposition within the Council. Among those of adverse mind was Councillor Chamberlain. There was a feeling that "the estimates were vague, the lands unsuitable, the works underestimated, and the beneficial results problematical". Furthermore, the previous conduct of the sewage department by the Committee had not developed a confidence in its ability for carrying out such a vast experiment. Accordingly, an amendment was offered, proposing that a special committee, of which Chamberlain was named a member, should be appointed to consider and report the best mode of dealing with the sewage. The Sewage Inquiry Committee instituted an extensive and minute investigation of the sewage problem; the results embodied in a large volume were regarded as of high importance on the question of sewage treatment.<sup>1</sup> The pro-

2 vols. (Birmingham, 1885), vol. ii, p. xxxiv. Mr. C. A. Vince speaks of this as the first victory of the progressive party. *British Association Handbook*, 1913, *loc. cit.*, Vince, C. A., "Municipal Government" (Birmingham, 1913), p. 152.

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 128-132; *Post*, July 7, 1871; *Birmingham Sewage*



posals of the Committee favouring the introduction of the Rochdale system<sup>1</sup> were finally approved, and authority was given to proceed with the new scheme of operations. The entire charge of the sewage of the Borough was thereby transferred from the Public Works Committee to the special Committee, so that the progressive element came permanently into control of this field of municipal affairs. In the years immediately following, there was established a thoroughly efficient sewage department which carried its plan to a successful conclusion. In the last year of Chamberlain's mayoralty, a recommendation of the Sewage Inquiry Committee of 1871, to the effect that a United Drainage District be formed, was adopted by the representatives of the local authorities involved. Their action was confirmed by act of Parliament in 1877 and the Sewage Committee handed over its work to the newly elected Drainage Board which proceeded to carry out a more extensive programme of improvements.<sup>2</sup>

In the ordinary routine of Corporation business, Chamberlain gave his able services as a member of the Watch Committee.<sup>3</sup> It was his purpose to introduce into the

*Enquiry Report*, 1871 (Birmingham, 1871). In this Report, Chamberlain's name appears in the list of members of the Committee; however, he was absent from all the nineteen meetings held. His support of the Report is evident from a speech before the Council, Oct. 26, 1871. See *Post*, Oct. 27, 1871. Alderman Hawkes in nominating Chamberlain for mayor explained that he had been unanimously elected a member of the Sewage Inquiry Committee, out of which developed the Executive Sewage Committee. Of the latter he was not a member. *Post*, Nov. 11, 1873.

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the Rochdale or Pan system, see Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-142 *passim*, 152-167 *passim*. The Drainage Board eventually appointed was for the whole district draining into the River Tame and thus polluting its waters. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain was also on the Endowed Schools Committee from 1869 to 1873. *Post*, Nov. 10, 1869, Nov. 17, 1870, Nov. 10, 1871, Nov. 11, 1872.

Police Department the same efficiency which would be found in a well-organized manufacturing establishment. For the accomplishment of this purpose and in behalf of the maintenance of order, he urged an increase of authority for the Chief Officer of Police, contending that a more extensive responsibility was essential to the efficient conduct of the force. This power which was originally granted for a period of six months was shown to be satisfactory by its later extension for a longer period. Provision for a more effective service was made later by an addition of fifty men to the Department.<sup>1</sup> The active service on the Watch Committee of one who was later to occupy such a prominent position in the Corporation was also significant in the opportunity it provided him for an insight into the moral and physical deficiencies of the citizens of Birmingham. The excessive drunkenness reported at the monthly meetings of the Committee and the existence of intemperance even in the police force itself<sup>2</sup> could not have failed to impress the progressive municipal reformer with the desirability of some solution of the drink problem. His efforts in this direction bore fruit in his plan for public-house reform which he brought forward in 1877.<sup>3</sup>

The partial account of Chamberlain's activities recorded above indicates that progress was being made. The reform party of four existent in 1869 steadily grew in numbers; four years later success crowned its efforts. In 1873 it was resolved by the Birmingham Liberal Association that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 2, and Aug. 17, 1870; Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 276. Another salutary innovation due to Chamberlain was a new requirement that when a memorial was referred to the Chief Superintendent of the Police, he should report back to the Committee. *Post and Journal* (weekly edition), Nov. 13, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> The bi-monthly reports of the Watch Committee in the *Post* of this period give the record of drunkenness in the city and the intemperance of the police force itself.

<sup>3</sup> See *infra*, pp. 61, 62.

the Association, contrary to precedent, should in the future take part in municipal elections.<sup>1</sup> Every ward in the town was contested; the result of the election indicated a large majority in favour of the reformers, who immediately proceeded to elect Chamberlain as the new Mayor. A period of great accomplishments for the Corporation of Birmingham followed. He who had dreamed dreams and had seen visions of what Birmingham might become now realized that the time of fulfilment had arrived. Election to the chairmanship of the Birmingham School Board in the same year afforded another opportunity for the realization of his hopes. His activities in this position, however, will be recorded in connexion with his policy of reform in education. In both positions, his colleagues, irrespective of their views, could not but admire their model chairman who with the efficiency of a successful man of business dispensed the proceedings of Council and Board with vigour and dispatch.<sup>2</sup>

In discussing the three-year mayoralty of Joseph Chamberlain, and the succeeding four years during which he retained membership on the Council, mention is usually made only of three great achievements associated with his name—the acquisition of gas and water and the initiation of the Improvement Scheme; yet it is of consequence to know that there were few phases of municipal activity which did not receive his encouragement. From evidence furnished by a fellow-citizen, one learns that “he offered suggestions and stimulus to every chairman of a Council committee, with a view to the extension and development of each department, and lent to all his support and active help to realize every possibility of further usefulness”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Mar. 26, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1873-1874 (Birmingham, 1874), p. 6; *British Mercantile Gazette*, 1876 (Birmingham, 1876), p. 3; *Post*, Dec. 4, 1873.

<sup>3</sup> *Central Literary Magazine*, vol. 21 (1913-1914), p. 302.

A definite embodiment of the new spirit which he aspired to create in the life of the municipality was afforded by the erection of a Council House commensurate with the needs and dignity of one of the first Corporations of the Kingdom. On June 17, 1874, the first stone was laid by Mayor Chamberlain who utilized the occasion to express to his fellow citizens his regret that the undertaking might not have been even greater, that the Council House plans had not included separate assize courts and law courts for the municipality.<sup>1</sup>

To the advancement of all institutions whose purpose was to develop an intelligent, righteous and prosperous civic community, he gave his energetic support. Aside from his numerous activities in fostering educational facilities—primary, secondary and higher, Chamberlain was not neglectful of such institutions as the Free Libraries and Art Gallery. To further their usefulness, he joined with others in advocating that they should be open to the public on Sundays because “he considered these institutions of the people, and they ought to be opened under certain restrictions on the only day when the people could take advantage of them”. His confidence in such municipal organizations was very substantially expressed in 1875 by a gift of £1000 to the Corporation for the purchase of examples of industrial art for permanent exhibition in the Art Gallery.<sup>2</sup>

In a speech in November, 1874, the Mayor touched on another problem demanding attention. “The greatest difficulty, as it seems to me, in connection with the working

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, June 18, 1874. Birmingham was at this time a part of the Assize of Warwick. It was Chamberlain's wish and his determination that the Corporation should be constituted an Assize town. Here again he was conscious not only of the inconvenience attendant upon the existing arrangement, but also of the lack of dignity it fostered. For his later efforts in accomplishing his wishes, see *infra*, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Jan. 2, 1874; Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

classes of this country, is their want of proper recreation. . . . The greatest student in the world wants some change in his occupation, and unfortunately our working men seem to have very little idea of recreation." One solution to this problem was the remarkable growth of parks in Birmingham during the 'seventies. Four beautiful parks and one recreation ground (playground) became the property of the Corporation between 1873 and 1879. One of these, Highgate Park, was formally opened by Mayor Chamberlain during his term of office. Attempts were made in other ways to beautify the city of Birmingham, for Chamberlain was one of those who believed that the ugliness of ordinary English existence had a bad effect upon the citizens. According to instructions by the Council, trees were planted in various parts of the town.

A remarkable improvement also took place in the streets and footpaths. Editorial comment in the *Daily Post* of December 20, 1872, discloses the neglected condition of the streets at that time. The Public Works Committee directed the attention of the Council to the state of the highways, with the result that the following year a definite program of street paving was under way. Wood paving, with which only an experiment had been made up to this time, was extensively employed, as well as the older method of paving with granite. Chamberlain advocated asphalt paving, which had not as yet acquired much favour. The paving of many foot paths was made possible by the passage of the Public Health Act of 1875 whereby the improvement of streets was treated as a sanitary work. The Council was thereby enabled to pass a resolution providing not less than £30,000 annually for the paving of foot paths.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, p. 56; Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 202; *Post*, Dec. 20, 1872, Feb. 19, 1873, Oct. 29, 1875; *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1873-1874, p. 197, 1875-1876, p. 333.

Adequate protection to property from fire was another reform inaugurated shortly after the progressive element came into control of the Council. In 1871 the staff of the fire brigade, which had been maintained previously by the fire-insurance companies, was being depleted in numbers, and attendance at fires was limited solely to property insured in their offices. Regardless of this situation, the Watch Committee reported adversely on the question of the Corporation taking over the brigade. Two years later when notice was given by the fire-insurance companies that they would discontinue all protection at the end of the year, the Committee reversed its earlier decision and advised that the Council adopt measures for an efficient brigade. Even in this contingency, the Council in August, 1873, negatived the report of the Committee. Consequently, two months after Chamberlain became Mayor, the agitation was renewed, with the result that the recommendation of the Watch Committee was accepted, and instructions were given for the establishment of an efficient service.<sup>1</sup>

The first great project carried by Chamberlain after he became Mayor was the acquisition of gas by the Corporation. Three years prior to the Mayor's proposal that such an extensive undertaking be considered, the passage of the Local Government Act of 1871<sup>2</sup> marked a definite step forward in general municipal development throughout the country. The Act had set up a new central authority in London, known as the Local Government Board, to provide general supervision of the laws relating to the public health, the relief of the poor, and local government. A link be-

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Insurance Institute Transactions*, 1888-1895, *loc. cit.*, Tozer, Alfred R., "Development of the Fire Brigade" (Birmingham, 1895), pp. 104-106. Mr. Tozer was appointed the first superintendent of the fire brigade when it was reorganized and separated from the police department in 1879.

<sup>2</sup> 34 and 35 Vict., c. 70.

tween Parliament and local authorities, making possible greater activity in local government reform, was thus provided. Following the formation of this Board came the passing of the Public Health Act of 1872<sup>1</sup> and later the Public Health Act of 1875,<sup>2</sup> a measure which has been described as the greatest sanitary code ever enacted in any country. It increased enormously the powers of Corporations to provide for the sanitary improvement of their areas, and included, among other things, authority to acquire gas and water undertakings.<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain's progressive programme was thus presented at a most opportune time.

In 1874, gas was supplied to the Corporation by two private companies.<sup>4</sup> In moving a resolution on January 13, 1874, that the General Purposes Committee be authorized to conduct negotiations for the acquisition of the gas works, the Mayor gave expression to his conviction, which had been set forth on former occasions, of the value of muni-

<sup>1</sup> 35 and 36 Vict., c. 79. Bunce speaks of this measure as the real starting point of sanitary activity throughout the country. Under the Act, Birmingham was constituted an Urban Sanitary District, and the Council an Urban Sanitary Authority. Dr. Hill, of whom mention is made later, had been appointed Medical Officer as well as Analyst after the passage of the Public Health Act of 1872, which made it imperative that a Medical Office of Health be appointed. Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Birmingham showed her active interest in this parliamentary legislation when a deputation from the Town Council had an interview with the President of the Local Government Board, relative to the insertion in the measure about to be introduced by the President, of clauses enabling municipal authorities and other sanitary authorities to supply water within their jurisdiction for public and sanitary purposes. Mayor Chamberlain, Alderman Avery and the Town Clerk offered various amendments. One clause they wished to insert would enable Corporations to purchase waterworks on principles of valuation to be fixed by the Act or by the Local Government Board. *Post*, Feb. 12, 1875.

<sup>3</sup> 38 and 39 Vict., c. 55; *Central Literary Magazine*, vol. 21 (1913-1914), pp. 127-128.

<sup>4</sup> Birmingham Gas, Light and Coke Company and the Birmingham and Staffordshire Gas Company. Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

cipal institutions and of the advantages which could be derived from local self-government. He thought that monopolies sustained in any way by the State should be in the hands of the representatives of the people by whom they should be administered and to whom the profits should go. In this he departed from the view of his fellow-citizens who thought that such public utilities should be left to private enterprise and energy. In maintaining his position, he made special reference to John Stuart Mill, "the greatest political thinker of his age, who had always asserted and had written in his book of political economy, that such undertakings as those to which his resolution referred, should be excluded from the rule to which they constituted a legitimate exception and should be placed in the hands of the local authority".<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain then proceeded to explain the advantage which could be derived from such an acquisition at that time. In order that various civic improvements might be carried out, it was essential that more ample funds should be provided. He foresaw in the ownership of the municipal gas works the opportunity of meeting this need. The profits at that time issued as dividends to private stockholders might become the financial resources of the Corporation, to be devoted to the proposed improvements. Furthermore, when the property of the two companies was brought under Corporation ownership, the double service might be dispensed with and a considerable saving thus be accomplished. A further gain would also be possible in consideration of the lower rate of interest at which the Corporation could raise the necessary loans.<sup>2</sup> Since it was possible to make a

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Jan. 14, 1874. Also, see Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of Political Economy* (New York, 1920), p. 962.

<sup>2</sup> The Birmingham Gas Company was at this time applying to Parliament for permission to raise a loan of £300,000. *Post*, Jan. 14, 1874.



bargain with the gas works, which would be advantageous to both parties and at the same time occasion not the slightest additional increase to the rates of the Borough, he pressed most urgently the proposed resolution. His convincing speech resulted in a large majority vote for the resolution.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to the resolution came the favourable report of the General Purposes Committee on March 24, which resulted in a vote for the purchase of the gas works according to terms arranged.<sup>2</sup> The Mayor's speech on this occasion demonstrated clearly to his colleagues the thoroughness with which he had investigated the whole situation. The insight of a man of business was shown in his insistence that, should the negotiations be completed, the "Council must make up its mind to employ, at the best possible price, the best possible assistance for the management of the undertaking". He was likewise mindful of the welfare of the public servant, pointing out that unless the Council was prepared to deal liberally with its employees, and was satisfied that it was real economy to give them sufficient remuneration, it should have nothing to do with the gas works.<sup>3</sup>

The execution of provisional agreements with the gas companies was accomplished and arrangements made to proceed with the necessary legislation in Parliament. In spite of the strenuous opposition of local boards and large consumers, the bill for purchase passed Parliament in the spring of 1875 and received the Royal assent on August 2. In the course of the enactment of this legislation, Mayor Chamberlain was among the witnesses called who gave

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1873-1874, p. 76. Fifty-four votes were cast for the resolution, two against it.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283, 288. The resolution was carried 46 to 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Short History of the Passing of the Birmingham (Corporation) Gas Act and Birmingham (Corporation) Water Act with Speeches of Mayor Joseph Chamberlain* (Birmingham, 1875).

satisfactory evidence of the fair-minded attitude of the Corporation toward the local authorities involved.<sup>1</sup> After the passage of the measure, the Mayor moved the appointment of a Gas Committee which was authorized to complete the purchase of the works and manage the business. An innovation was introduced when the Mayor himself became chairman of the Committee, a situation which he believed was justified by the exceptional circumstances of the case. An editorial in the *Birmingham Daily Post* confirms the opinion that the Mayor was the one upon whom should devolve the completion of the work. "The credit of the purchase is due to Mr. Chamberlain. It was he who proposed it; he conducted the delicate enquiries necessary in the preliminary stages; he conducted the most active part of the final negotiations."<sup>2</sup> A small notebook filled with his calculations on the project, now in the possession of the Birmingham Gas Department, is a further proof of the minute consideration which he had given to every phase of the undertaking.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee proceeded to make arrangements for the transfer of the gas works on September 1, 1875—a date three months earlier than was provided by the Act of Parliament, with the result that the Corporation received a net profit for the first half-year of over £25,000. Financial gain, however, was not the sole consideration; the comfort of the workmen employed at the works also engaged the Committee's attention to the extent that a suitable mess room was provided for the use of the stokers at Saltley. About two years later a Sick Fund was also established for

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-363.

<sup>2</sup> *Short History of the Passing of the Birmingham Gas Act and Water Act*, p. 38; *Post*, Mar. 26, 1874, Oct. 6, 1875.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Austen Chamberlain, in conversation with the writer, referred to this note-book which he had recently presented to the Birmingham Gas Department.

the workmen employed by the Department; in addition, Sunday labour was discontinued at the works.<sup>1</sup> Notable success, such as Mayor Chamberlain had foretold, resulted from the efficient services of the Gas Committee. In less than two years, upwards of sixty thousand pounds had been obtained for the work of the Borough, while at the same time the price of gas had been reduced and its quality improved. Chamberlain in June, 1876, resigned the mayoralty to accept a seat in the House of Commons, but he continued his services as chairman of the Gas Committee until August, 1880. At that date, he severed entirely his connexion with the Birmingham Council, on account of his acceptance of the Presidency of the Board of Trade in Gladstone's Second Ministry. On this occasion, the Committee passed the following minute in recognition of the efficient services of their chairman:

That the resignation of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, M. P., as Chairman of this Committee be accepted; and that, while congratulating him on his appointment to high office in Her Majesty's Government, the Committee desire to express their sense of loss which they will sustain by his retirement from office here, their grateful acknowledgment of his unsparing devotion and skill with which he has administered the affairs of the Department, and brought it to its present successful position, and their assurance that by his unvarying kindness and courtesy in the discharge of the duties of his office he has won the lasting esteem and regard of every member of the Committee.

That the Committee also desire to place on record their sense of the valuable services which Mr. Chamberlain has rendered to the town of Birmingham in connexion with his work in this Department, and to acknowledge that while the acquirement of this undertaking was the result of his foresight, the immediate

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 366, 374.

and constantly increasing success which has attended its working has been due to his laborious attention to its interest; to his ability in devising the policy which should be followed in its management; to his mastery of the details of its affairs, and to his unselfish devotion of his time to its conduct from the date of its acquirement by the town.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain lived to see the Gas Department which he had done so much to acquire and develop, become the largest and most prosperous provincial undertaking in the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Chamberlain's interest in the second great municipal reform associated with his administration, the acquisition of the water works, centered in an entirely different motive from that which inspired the acquisition of the gas works. The high principle laid down by the Mayor as the author of the scheme is found in his explanation that "whereas, there should be a profit made on the gas under-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 373; *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1879-1880, p. 391; Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> *British Association Handbook*, *loc. cit.*, Hilton, R. S., "The Gas Department of the Corporation of Birmingham" (Birmingham, 1913), p. 217. In 1913 the income of the Department was over a million sterling, and from this amount a substantial sum was contributed to the rates of the city. Since 1875 no less than £1,767,897 had been contributed, an average for thirty-eight years of £46,524 per year. Furthermore, the price had been reduced from time to time—the average price in 1875 had been 3s. 1¼d. a thousand, by 1913 it was 1s. 7½d.

The Great War naturally interfered with the remarkable prosperity of the Gas Department. In September, 1921, the price of gas reached 5s. 6d., and no contribution could be made to the rates. In 1923, however, with returning prosperity, the contribution to the rates was again possible. However, it is not always possible to determine the status of the Department by such contributions, as the public welfare may be as well served by the reduction of the price of gas or by improvements in the undertaking. This information relating to the recent financial status of the Department was given to the author in August, 1924, by Mr. R. L. Liney, Assistant Secretary of the Gas Department, from the unpublished records available in the office.

taking, the water works should never be a source of profit, as all profit should go in reduction of the price of water". His proposal that the Corporation should control its own water supply was not a new one; unsuccessful agitation of the question had taken place on three former occasions—in 1854, 1869, and 1871.<sup>1</sup> Even so, Mayor Chamberlain was undaunted by such experience, and he was likewise unconcerned by the unwillingness of the Water Company to part with its property. Accordingly, just at the time when the General Purposes Committee was instructed to prepare a bill for the transfer of the gas undertaking, Chamberlain introduced a resolution proposing that a second bill be prepared for the transfer, by agreement or by compulsory purchase, of the water-works undertaking. His masterly speech convinced his colleagues of the soundness of his proposition. His main argument for acquisition was based upon three considerations: the relation of healthful conditions to the water supply; the special reasons for representative control rather than private ownership where pecuniary gain was necessarily the first consideration; the opportuneness of the current moment for obtaining possession of the monopoly.

In relation to the first, he disclosed the unfavourable health conditions existent in the community and attributed the excessive death rate to zymotic and other preventable diseases. Referring to the Report of the medical officer, he gave illustrations of the impure character of the well water at the disposal of half the population of Birmingham, and proposed as the only safe course the abandonment of all such sources of supply for domestic purposes. He further contended that the only way of securing the interests of the poorer classes of the inhabitants was to take steps to enforce upon all the builders and owners of house property the provision of an adequate supply of water.

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-408 *passim*.

Such a power he did not believe could be entrusted to private companies that had a distinct pecuniary interest in the water supply. His vision of what the Birmingham Water Works might become was demonstrated in his favourable reference to the Report of Mr. Robert Rawlinson, who recommended a gigantic scheme which involved going to the mountains of Wales for the supply of water for the town.

Chamberlain's argument that the time had come when the transfer should be effected was most convincing. Since 1851, when the transfer was first considered, the cost of the undertaking had more than quadrupled. In addition, his belief in the success of such an undertaking was not based on theory alone, but on the experiences of the many cities which had already secured their own water supply, and as a result were enjoying large profits or a considerable reduction of the water rate. The Mayor won the unanimous approval of the Council, and its decision was enthusiastically sanctioned by the people of Birmingham.<sup>1</sup> Upon the failure of the Mayor to negotiate terms of purchase with the Water Company, the Council authorized the introduction of a bill in Parliament which would empower the Corporation to purchase the undertaking and require the Company to sell the same. The procedure of the measure through Parliament was not without considerable opposition, but the Mayor as the principal witness before both the Commons' Committee and the Lords' Committee, presented a strong case for the Corporation of Birmingham. In a few striking statements he explained the policy of the bill then before the Commons' Committee. "In the case of water it is a question chiefly of health. It seems to me absolutely certain that what Dr. Simon has called the power

<sup>1</sup> *Short History of the Passing of the Birmingham Gas Act and Water Act*, pp. 51-73 *passim*.

of life and health should not be left in the hands of a commercial company, but should be conducted by the representatives of the people." Later, before the Lords' Committee, he said: "We have not the slightest intention of making a profit. We shall get our profit indirectly, in the comfort of the town and the health of the inhabitants."<sup>1</sup> The bill as finally passed in July, 1875, allowed the Corporation to expropriate the undertaking by agreement, or failing that, by arbitration. A Water Committee was accordingly appointed, and the purchase by agreement was concluded. Chamberlain considered these terms very high; however, he did not consider it wise to arbitrate. At the same time he showed a vital concern in the policy which the Water Committee would carry out. He hoped one of the first things the Council would do would be to lower the rates for water to small houses, and in that way endeavour to benefit the poor people of the city by "inducing them to take their better quality water in preference to the death-dealing water they were then drinking."<sup>2</sup>

Under the efficient chairmanship of Alderman Avery, the Water Department began its career of successful development, with the result that in 1892 it was sufficiently vigorous to proceed with vast plans of improvement similar to those referred to by Mayor Chamberlain in his speech of

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 409, 411.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Oct. 27, 1875. Reductions in the water rent were made in 1880 and 1883; the reduction in 1883 was devoted to water rents on houses up to £40 of annual rental. Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 426, 434. In 1883 a controversy developed over a proposal to appropriate a certain portion of the income of the Water Committee to the Borough Fund. This was opposed by Alderman Avery, the chairman of the Water Committee, and others who upheld the policy stated by Chamberlain at the time of acquisition that it was wiser to apply all the surplus funds in improving the sources of supply, the quality of the water, the means of distribution, and in reducing the charges for water. The proposal was ultimately carried, regardless of this opposition. Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

December 4, 1874. The senior Member from Birmingham ably supported a bill before Parliament, proposing to obtain a supply of water for Birmingham and the surrounding towns from a district in Wales—the head waters of the Elan and the Claerwen, two small rivers in the highlands. In the face of considerable opposition the bill was carried, and the Corporation started its gigantic undertaking which even at the present time (1925) is an incomplected project.<sup>1</sup>

The last of Chamberlain's municipal achievements, the initiation of the improvement scheme, may be regarded as the culmination of his very fruitful efforts in behalf of sanitary reform. While it is true that it proved to be much more than a sanitary measure, the fact is, it was brought about as a result of his whole-hearted interest in making the city of Birmingham a place where poor as well as rich might live healthful and contented lives. For this reason, it is essential first to know of his preliminary efforts to improve the sanitary conditions of the municipality. One of the first requisites in carrying out a programme of reform was an efficient health and sanitation department. A beginning was made in the reorganization of the Sanitary Committee by the Town Council. The appointment of additional sanitary inspectors to whom would be assigned a sanitary census of the wards of the city was recommended. Every street, house and court was to be inspected, in order to ascertain the conditions of drainage, water supply, ventilation and other factors upon which the health of the community was dependent. When the newly appointed force was completely organized to undertake its labours, it was the Mayor himself who instructed them regarding the method

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 2 (1892), pp. 265-272 *passim*; 55 and 56 Vict., c. 173. The powers of the Corporation were enlarged in the Water Act of 1902. Vince, C. A., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1923), vol. iv, p. 436. This is a continuation of the work by J. T. Bunce.



and spirit in which the work should be done. He urged that they should enter upon their tasks in a spirit of helpfulness, teaching the people to be clean, and showing them how to live more healthful lives.<sup>1</sup> Further progress was made possible by obtaining the full-time services of Dr. Alfred Hill, medical officer and public analyst, in accordance with the recommendation of the Sanitary Committee. An epidemic of smallpox emphasized the necessity of urgent measures and gave force to the opinion of Dr. Hill that the water supply was greatly instrumental in bringing about unhealthful conditions in the city.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, Chamberlain's interest in sanitary reform, referred to by himself as a "hobby of mine", extended beyond the bounds of the city of Birmingham. While putting into action the measures mentioned above, he conceived the idea of a conference of municipal authorities and others interested in the sanitation of large towns, in order, as he said, "to create a sound public opinion on the subject". The conference was held January 13, 1875, at which at least one hundred corporations and local boards were represented by their mayors, chairmen of health committees, or medical officers of health. The Mayor in an opening address stated convincingly the seriousness of the problem. He said in part:

I have calculated that the preventable deaths in Birmingham are something like three thousand a year, that that represents the difference between the actual death rate and what we may consider the healthy and normal condition. Making the same sort of calculation as has been made for the whole country, I find that the annual loss in Birmingham from this cause is

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Nov. 19, 1874, May 20, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1873-1874, pp. 99-101; *Post*, June 5, 1875 (Annual Report of Dr. Hill). A Borough Hospital was acquired by the Corporation in 1874. Bunce, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

£54,000. I think that if we could only induce our population to make these calculations for themselves we should have very little to complain of as to ill-judged parsimony, which saves hundreds of pounds in sanitary precautions in order to lose tens of thousands in the death and ill-health of our population. We must remember that local governing bodies have not merely to consider questions affecting the lives and health of the people entrusted to their charge. We have to consider also their happiness and their morality. The circumstances of which I have spoken are fruitful occasions of misery, pauperism, intemperance and crime. All this disease is produced by filthy, ill-ventilated, uncomfortable homes; those homes, in their turn, drive the people to the public houses and worse places. . . . What folly it is to talk about moral and intellectual elevation of the masses when the conditions of life are such as to render elevation impossible. . . . Something must be done, and that quickly, to make life a little brighter and a little easier for those who now groan under its burden, if our boasted prosperity is to rest upon its only sure foundation—the happiness, the welfare and the contentment of the whole community.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to determine the constructive measures which may have resulted from Mayor Chamberlain's successful Sanitation Conference of 1875, but it is clear that it considerably assisted in promoting and shaping the Artisans' Dwelling Act of 1875, and definitely furthered the programme of sanitary reform in the city of Birmingham. In February, 1875, the Sanitary Committee presented an important Report to the Council, recommending an extension of the Department and presenting a complete census of the Borough. From the adoption of this Report, the sanitary work of the Corporation took a new departure. Means were placed at the disposal of the Committee for an efficient staff of inspection; measures were put into operation for the control of disease, special attention being directed to

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 63-65.

the prevalence of zymotic disease within the city. A study of the various charts showing the gradual decline of the death rate in the succeeding years gives very definite evidence of the effectiveness of their work.<sup>1</sup>

Coordinate with material progress was the creation of an enlightened public opinion which was capable of sanctioning Chamberlain's proposal to undertake a gigantic improvement scheme in the municipality. On July 27, 1875, the great project was set in motion by the Mayor's resolution that an Improvement Committee be appointed to draft an improvement scheme.<sup>2</sup> Such action was made possible by the passage of the Artisans' Dwelling Act of 1875, a measure in which Chamberlain had taken an active interest. The original object of the Bill<sup>3</sup> was to confer upon local authorities, in towns of not less than 25,000 population, the power of acquiring property, so as to enable them to deal with unhealthful areas, by removing buildings unsuitable for habitation, and by letting the land so obtained for the provision of artisans' dwellings and for other improvement purposes. Through the influence of representations of persons engaged in local administration, among whom the Mayor of Birmingham was especially prominent, the Bill was considerably modified. It made possible, under certain conditions and with the sanction of the Local Government Board, the acquisition of an unhealthful area with no extra price for compulsory sale, and the permission to the local authority to provide a scheme to remedy the condition of the condemned area, thus combining with sanitary reform opportunity for extensive town improvements. Meanwhile, Chamberlain was in frequent consultation with his col-

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-100, 110-125 *passim*, 456.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1874-1875, p. 523.

<sup>3</sup> The Bill was introduced by Sir Richard Cross, Secretary of State for the Home Department. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 322 (1875), p. 97.

leagues in the Council as to the possibility of its application in Birmingham. Consequently, when he moved his resolution for the appointment of an Improvement Committee, he received their unanimous approval.<sup>1</sup> Three months later this Committee presented its first Report, in which an unsanitary area in the very heart of Birmingham was designated, upon the recommendation of Dr. Hill, as the section which should be dealt with in the improvement scheme. In this locality, he reported "want of ventilation, want of light, want of proper and decent accommodation, resulting in dirty habits, low health and debased morals on the part of the tenants"<sup>2</sup>—all due to sanitary defects. To remedy these evils, the Committee proposed the formation of a new highway from New Street, the principal thoroughfare of the town, to Aston Road, and various improvements in the contiguous district. The net cost of carrying out the whole scheme was estimated in the Report at £461,958, but later modifications necessitated an increase in the funds required. Whereas the original proposal involved an area of about forty-three acres, the modified plan enlarged the district to nearly ninety-three acres, with the privilege of selecting those parts most defective from a sanitary point of view.<sup>3</sup>

Upon Mayor Chamberlain and Mr. White, the chairman of the Committee, rested the main responsibility of securing the acceptance of such vast proposals. In a speech before the Council on October 12, 1875, the Mayor emphasized the

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, Joseph, *The Progress of the Improvement Scheme* (Birmingham, 1878); Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 455-457.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1874-1875, p. 625. His description of the area was as follows: "Narrow streets; houses without back doors or windows, situated both in and out of courts; confined yards; courts open at one end only, and this opening small and narrow, . . . houses and shopping so dilapidated as to be in eminent danger of falling, and incapable of proper repair."

<sup>3</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 457-460.

two-fold aspect of the scheme—the combination of town improvement with sanitary reform. As a business man, he urged the necessity of town improvement, in order that the resources of the community might be increased and that Birmingham might become in fact the metropolis of the Midland counties. Moreover, wide streets were not merely the arteries of commerce; they were conducive to health, they were channels of ventilation. He stated clearly the expenditure involved and showed that in comparison with previous bit-by-bit improvements, the proposed street improvement would be the cheapest in the town. The advantages to be gained from the purchase sum in the years to come were truly prophesied in Chamberlain's words:

We shall become the ultimate freeholders of forty acres of land, and fifty years hence our successors will have the advantages of the "unearned increment" due to the improvement in the town; we secure the power to reconstruct the whole of the dwellings erected on that area; we throw open four and a half acres of streets, and we add four and a half acres to the fresh air spaces of the town.

He especially emphasized the moral aspect of the scheme. The moral atmosphere of the community he believed to be dependent in no small part upon the physical environment. Therefore, to remove disease and crime, it was essential to remedy the defective conditions which existed.<sup>1</sup>

The scheme was accordingly adopted by the Council and steps taken to put it into action. It soon developed that it was advisable to buy at once certain property included in the scheme, but as at that time the Committee had no authority to purchase, an Improvement Trust Fund was constituted, at the suggestion of the Mayor, to purchase such

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Oct. 13, 1875.

properties. Toward this fund Chamberlain guaranteed £10,000, while various contributions were made by other members of the Council and their friends. When a government inquiry as to the propriety of granting a Provisional Order to Birmingham to carry out her project aroused considerable opposition from the property owners affected, the case of the Council was so ably defended by Mayor Chamberlain that the scheme in its entirety was confirmed by the Local Government Board. The Confirming Act of Parliament was passed in August, 1876, after Chamberlain himself had become a member of that legislative body.<sup>1</sup>

Citizens of Birmingham today cannot but view with pride the great achievement of the improvement scheme as visible in Corporation Street, now one of the main business streets of the city, while fifty years ago part of the area had been a seat of filthy homes and a bed of disease and vice. Furthermore, it will be within the lifetime of these citizens that the seventy-five year leases on land bordering on Corporation Street will expire, and as Chamberlain predicted, the Borough of Birmingham will become one of the richest cities in the Kingdom. As mentioned above, it was in the initiation of this stupendous enterprise that Chamberlain made his great contribution to the project; after his entrance into the larger sphere of parliamentary affairs, the execution of the plan was carried out by other hands. During the four years when he retained his membership as alderman in the Council, however, his influence and interest in the development of the project were important. His vigorous defence of it against the opposition which such a gigantic undertaking naturally aroused was valuable. He strongly approved and defended the proposal of the Committee to grant leases of land for building for a period of seventy-five years instead of ninety-nine years as had been

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-468.

desired by certain parties.<sup>1</sup> The advantages of the seventy-five year lease to the Corporation of Birmingham is self-evident.

Considerable explanation was necessary to quell the criticism<sup>2</sup> of those who were disappointed by the failure to provide workmen's dwellings in the improvement scheme area. These criticisms were not surprising, considering the great expectations which the Mayor himself had aroused during the agitation for the undertaking. In his important address before the Council, October 12, 1875, he had said that they were going to displace nine thousand people, and the architects had told him that they had not the slightest doubt but that by a rearrangement of the blocks of building and by improved construction they would be able to rehouse in good dwellings at least eighteen thousand people. He presented the possibility of even greater accomplishments when he said at Sheffield about a month later: "The town [Birmingham] is at present engaged in a gigantic enterprise to give comfortable dwellings to forty thousand of the population."<sup>3</sup> Such statements may have led to the expectation that municipal dwellings would be erected by the Corporation. In fact, the local authority of Birmingham had not been entrusted with the erection of buildings in the improvement area though they had been made *responsible* for the securing of suitable dwellings to accommodate the persons of the working class displaced by the scheme.<sup>4</sup> As Mr. Chamberlain explained in 1878, they were made "land letters, and not builders". With a view to promoting the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 472-482 *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> In this connexion, see Brindley, J. M., *The Homes of the Working Classes and the Promises of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain*, M. P. (London, 1884).

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, Oct. 13 and Nov. 25, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> 38 and 39 Vict., c. 36, sec. 9; 39 and 40 Vict., c. 235; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1876, vol. 30, pp. 63-71.

construction of improved dwellings for artisans, a certain area had been purchased by the Corporation, but it was successful in letting only a small portion for the designed purpose. Since there were so many dwellings available for the use of the working class, private contractors were not interested in the erection of new model houses. Provision for a large number of the temporarily displaced population was found in the remodelled dwelling houses of the improvement area. Eventually (December, 1883) an Artisans' Dwelling Inquiry Committee was appointed to investigate the whole problem of dwelling-house accommodation for the artisan class. The findings of the Committee resulted in a Report that there was adequate accommodation for the artisan and labouring classes within the Borough, and that generally speaking the buildings were in a fairly sanitary condition.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the situation which developed, the Corporation was relieved by the Local Government Board from the necessity of rehousing the population displaced. From these experiences, Chamberlain arrived at the conclusion that in provincial towns at any rate, the provision of dwellings for the population displaced in improvement areas might safely be left to private enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

Today such controversies are forgotten; a great constructive accomplishment which has brought health and prosperity to the Corporation of Birmingham, testifies to the wisdom of the Mayor who set in motion the great project.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, Joseph, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 483, 484, 500-506.

<sup>2</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 40 (1883), p. 771; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-85, vol. 30, pp. 444-447, 456, 457. Chamberlain gave a complete account of the Birmingham improvement scheme in his evidence before the Housing Commission of 1884-85.

<sup>3</sup> In the light of what Chamberlain accomplished for Birmingham, Mr. Lucy's comment is of interest: "Probably if Mr. Chamberlain's



During the four years following Chamberlain's resignation as Mayor when he retained membership on the Council, one other important proposal which found favour with his colleagues is associated with his name. His eight years of experience in dealing with the perplexing questions of a great municipality had made him keenly conscious of the evils of the liquor traffic; for its alleviation he finally brought forth a modified Gothenburg system.<sup>1</sup> The character of his plan is definitely stated in the following resolution which Chamberlain moved before the Council on January 2, 1877:

*Resolved*, that in the opinion of this Council, it is desirable that local representative authorities should be empowered to acquire, on payment of fair compensation, on a principle to be fixed by Parliament, all existing interests in the retail sale of intoxicating drinks within their respective districts; and, therefore, if they think fit, to carry on the trade for the convenience and on behalf of the inhabitants, but so that no individual shall have any pecuniary interest in, or derive any profit from, the sale.<sup>2</sup>

The Council liberally gave its approval to the resolution by a vote of 46 to 10; Parliament, however, was not so

walk in life had been limited to the boundaries of Birmingham, that enterprising place would have had access to the sea. Having transformed the slums, settled the water, sewage and drainage questions, the still young man of Birmingham, sighing for fresh worlds to conquer, conceived the idea of cutting a canal connecting Birmingham with the Bristol Channel. But Fate and Fortune beckoned him to stray beyond Birmingham, and the place remains to this day a Midland town unsuccoured by the sea." Lucy, Henry W., *Memories of Eight Parliaments* (London, 1908), p. 191.

<sup>1</sup> After personally investigating the liquor situation in Sweden, Chamberlain contributed an article to the *Fortnightly Review*, 1876, in which he explained the Gothenburg system. According to the plan then in operation, a company carried on trade in spirits for the sole benefit of the community, to whose use all the profits were devoted—*Fortnightly Review*, vol. 26 (1876), p. 701.

successfully won over to this further extension of local authority. On March 13, 1877, Birmingham's junior Member moved his resolution to the effect that town councils, upon the conditions stated above, be empowered to acquire control of the liquor traffic. His able and reasonable speech won considerable commendation, but the resolution was rejected by a large majority vote.<sup>1</sup> With this action, Chamberlain's proposal speedily passed out of the realm of practical politics.<sup>2</sup>

When it became necessary for Chamberlain to sever his connexion with the Birmingham Council, upon his acceptance of the presidency of the Board of Trade in 1880, his municipal activities were ended, except in the capacity of protecting the welfare of the constituency which he represented in the imperial Parliament, and in rendering those services which he felt privileged to give as a loyal resident of his adopted city.<sup>3</sup>

One great achievement which he was instrumental in bringing to a successful conclusion was the constitution of Birmingham as an Assize town.<sup>4</sup> Such an object had been

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 232, pp. 1861-1898.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain's complete policy for the reform of the liquor traffic is discussed in the chapter on "Labour Legislation." It will be seen there that his proposals had aroused sufficient attention to be brought forward in a somewhat modified form nearly twenty years later.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. A. C. Vince, author of *History of Corporation of Birmingham*, volumes iii and iv, and Secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist organization for many years, said in conversation with the author in August, 1924, that Mr. Chamberlain made no attempt to dictate or influence municipal policy after resigning from the Council in 1880. He believed that those who assumed the responsibility in the acceptance of office should determine the policy of the Corporation.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Austen Chamberlain in talking to the author in July, 1924, referred to his father's services in behalf of the constitution of Birmingham as an Assize town as one of his three main contributions to the town. The first was his effort to dignify municipal life, from which came the elevation of civic responsibility throughout the country, the last the founding of the University of Birmingham.

steadily kept in view by the Town Council since 1857, and at various times it had almost been attained. During Chamberlain's first term of office as Mayor, an endeavour was made to induce the Government to constitute a Midland Assize district, with Birmingham as its center. The only advantage gained was the answer of the Government that as soon as proper courts were provided, Birmingham might be made an Assize town. Another effort in 1875 was without effect. The following year more definite steps were taken. Mayor Chamberlain's Report to the General Purposes Committee tells of interviews with the Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary, and others, as well as a "Memorial" presented to the Home Secretary, setting forth the request for an Assize district. Upon his recommendation the Council resolved that it was desirable to proceed with the erection of proper courts and other buildings to be used for the purpose of holding Assizes for the Borough. Still parliamentary action did not follow and the subject was deferred until 1880 when the Improvement Committee was directed to retain a piece of land in the new Corporation Street as a probable site for Assize Courts, such action being in accordance with Chamberlain's recommendation in 1876. No further step was taken until 1883 when negotiations with the Government were reopened. This proved a more opportune time since Birmingham's junior representative was a member of Gladstone's Cabinet. In the following year Birmingham was constituted an Assize town.<sup>1</sup>

His services in 1892 in securing the passage of a bill which made possible for the city of Birmingham the provision of a magnificent water supply in Wales have already been considered.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-272; *Birmingham Council Proceedings*, 1875-1876, pp. 212-220.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 52.

Chamberlain's willingness, as a citizen of Birmingham, to aid in the solution of her problems was evidenced in his relation to the West Birmingham Relief Fund. To him was partly due the credit of the idea of establishing this organization, which he described as a permanent association for the relief of temporary distress.<sup>1</sup> He believed that if temporary assistance could be given to the industrious worker who found himself in straightened circumstances, the opportunity would be provided for that individual to regain his former position of self-support and self-respect, thus rendering a double service to the worthy citizens of the Corporation and to the community at large.<sup>2</sup> During the six years of its existence (1891-1896) he gave his efficient services as president of the Relief Fund.<sup>3</sup>

The highest expression of civic pride and civic responsibility is seen today in the attractive buildings and grounds of the University of Birmingham, an institution which recognizes as her founder, Joseph Chamberlain, the Mayor of former days. Since achievements in this particular field may be regarded as the culmination of his educational efforts, they will be considered in some detail in connexion with his policy in education, yet his untiring zeal in establishing the institution and his later activities as chancellor of the University cannot wholly be passed over here. The significance of such a preeminent achievement by this leader of municipal and educational reform was recognized by *The Spectator*, July, 1901:

The thorough and stimulating way in which Mr. Chamberlain has identified himself with the life and growth of his own city

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Jan. 17, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Statement of Mr. C. A. Vince to the author in August, 1924.

<sup>3</sup> *West Birmingham Relief Fund Leaflets*, 1891-1896. The work of this organization was later supplanted by the Birmingham Aid Society, which is still in existence. Statement of Mr. Vince.

was most strikingly exemplified in Birmingham last Saturday when Mr. Chamberlain dressed in the robes of the Chancellor, walked and sat in state with the Senate and professors and officers of the Birmingham University at the first public conferring of degrees. That ceremony may, in a sense, be said to be the culmination of Mr. Chamberlain's ideal of city development.<sup>1</sup>

The municipal reform programme of the 'seventies is at once recognized as a radical departure from the *laissez-faire* policy of the preceding generation. A study of Chamberlain's life during this early period does not cause one to feel that there was any conscious adherence to any particular theory of government on his part, but as John Morley has remarked, "his politics came to him, now and always, from a penetrating observation of things around him as they actually were".<sup>2</sup>

It was natural that such proposals as the acquisition of public utilities and the inauguration of an improvement scheme, involving not only a new theory of municipal government but also incurring an enormous debt by the Corporation, should arouse some opposition on the part of the citizens of Birmingham, but on the whole, there seems to have existed a remarkable spirit of cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Chamberlain's own feeling regarding the cordial support he received from his fellow-citizens was expressed many years later, when, in referring to his mayoral term, he said: "It is a period to which I look back as perhaps the happiest in my life, for it is the only period in which I had everything my own way."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, vol. 87 (1901), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, vol. ii, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> The votes of the Council and the confirming action of the rate-payers on the three great projects is definite proof of this statement. Bunce, *op. cit.*, pp. 356, 408, 466.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, July 1, 1904.

The Birmingham of Chamberlain's day, the Birmingham of the present day, have both paid homage to their distinguished citizen and mayor. When he accepted office in the Liberal Government and severed his connexion with the Town Council, a unique recognition was accorded him by the erection of a Chamberlain Memorial Fountain, which was provided by public subscription, to commemorate his municipal services.<sup>1</sup> Eight years later, upon his return from America where he had so ably participated in the settlement of the Canadian-American Fisheries Dispute, the Corporation conferred upon him the highest distinction within its power: on March 28, 1888, in appreciation of his imperial labours and in recognition of his eminent services to the town, Chamberlain was admitted to be the first Honorary Freeman of the Borough. The gratitude of his home city was fittingly expressed in the words of Mayor Maurice Pollock: "Not only the Birmingham of today,

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Oct. 27, 1880. The memorial is appropriately situated in the civic center of Birmingham where Chamberlain carried on many of his activities. On one panel of the monument is the following inscription: "This memorial is erected in gratitude for public services given to this town by Joseph Chamberlain who was elected Town Councillor in November, 1869; Mayor in November, 1873; and resigned that office in June, 1876, on being returned as one of the representatives of the borough of Birmingham in Parliament; and during whose mayoralty many great and public works were notably advanced; and mainly by whose ability and devotion the gas and water undertakings were acquired by the town, to the great and lasting benefit of the inhabitants."

Chamberlain, in replying to the address presented to him as part of the memorial services, made a statement which is especially interesting in the light of his later parliamentary career: "He would confess that he was so parochial-minded that he looked with greater satisfaction on the annexation of the gas and water, on the 'scientific frontier' in the improvement area, than he did to the results of the imperial policy which had given us Cyprus and the Transvaal, and he was prouder of having engaged with them in warring against disease and crime and ignorance in Birmingham than if he had been the author of the Zulu war or the instigator of the invasion of Afghanistan."

but the Birmingham of future generations will reap the policy of improvement which you inaugurated when you were Mayor of Birmingham and which will be forever associated with the name of Joseph Chamberlain."<sup>1</sup> In the years which followed, when the social reformer of the 'seventies and 'eighties became the tariff reformer and the great imperialist of the new century, the Midland city never failed to give him support<sup>2</sup> and encouragement.

When in July, 1906, the active career of Joseph Chamberlain was almost at an end,<sup>3</sup> his fellow-citizens, without distinction of class or political party, joined in an impressive celebration in honour of his seventieth birthday and in recognition of his thirty years of strenuous parliamentary activity. The first day of the celebration was more particularly devoted to paying tribute to Chamberlain, the reformer and leader of Birmingham municipal life, the representative in Parliament of the interests and aspirations of its citizens. Though many of his former friends had parted from him in the field of imperial politics, nevertheless on this occasion they were willing to pay an admiring and affectionate homage to him for his tireless efforts in behalf of the Corporation. The tribute of the Reverend John Henry Jowett, one of these political opponents, presents a genuine appreciation of Chamberlain's many years of devoted service.

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Mar. 29, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> To be sure, Chamberlain had political opponents in his home city, but the fact that his constituents never failed to return him to Parliament from 1876 to 1914 is conclusive evidence that he retained the confidence of the people. In addition, his influence was sufficient to make Birmingham the stronghold of Liberal Unionism.

<sup>3</sup> A few days after the celebration, Chamberlain was taken seriously ill. Though he lived until July, 1914, he was never able to return to active political life. Milner and Others, *Life of Chamberlain*, pp. 55-73.

There is one huge realm in Mr. Chamberlain's services which even we in the ranks of Tuscany can scarce forbear to cheer, namely, his strenuous and persistent labour for the elevation and enrichment of the city. I suppose there is no parallel in modern political life of a statesman in the front rank maintaining such intimate and illuminated relationship with the city and constituents he represents. . . . I join, as a Birmingham citizen, in paying honour to a distinguished public servant who, amid all the triumphs and disappointments of party strife, has remained fruitfully absorbed in the parochial affairs of his own city, and who has proved to the people of England that where he is best known he is most trusted and beloved.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Times*, July 9, 1906. The parliamentary tribute of Mr. John Burns to Mr. Chamberlain in June, 1893, also carries special weight. He said that no one appreciated more than he the magnificent services which the right hon. Gentleman had rendered to municipal government—the disinterested and self-sacrificing work which he had performed for the Corporation of Birmingham when with such honour and distinction he had occupied the mayoralty of the city. *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 13 (1893), p. 674.



## CHAPTER III

### CHAMBERLAIN AND POLITICAL REFORM

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN entered the British Parliament at a time when belief in political reform had not yet weakened. To the Tory, it is true, the Reform Act of 1867 had accomplished even more than he had desired; but to the Radical, it was merely a step in the enlargement of a franchise which would secure the real representation of the nation in the House of Commons. Chamberlain, however, was not one of those who advocated political reform for its own sake; he considered that "grave constitutional changes" were justified only as the necessary antecedents of urgent and important legislation. He realized that the great social projects in which he was so much concerned were not to be attained so long as the classes most interested in their fulfillment were excluded from participating in the government of the United Kingdom.

Even before Chamberlain became Mayor of Birmingham, he allied himself with the forces which were demanding a further extension of the franchise. In November, 1872, he presided at a Conference on Electoral Reform in Birmingham, and as a representative of the local Liberal Association, of the City branch of the Central Nonconformist Committee, and of the Birmingham Republican Club, expressed his deep interest in the cause supported by the Conference. The following year when he set forth his programme of "Free Land, Free Church, Free Schools, and Free Labour" in the *Fortnightly Review*, he emphasized their dependence upon a liberal extension of the voting

privilege. His conviction as to the need of reform was strengthened by his personal experience in 1874 when he met defeat as parliamentary candidate for Sheffield. He realized keenly the injustice of a system by which the same number of votes recorded in his favour by the voters of Sheffield, had been sufficient to elect thirty-six members of the House of Commons. Of the entire membership of the House, only eighteen had polled a larger number of votes than he. Such an anomaly, which was caused by the fact that the electoral districts were unequal in population, he firmly believed should be removed.<sup>1</sup>

With his entrance into Parliament in 1876, he was provided with an opportunity to take a more active part in the enactment of legislation which would bring the masses of England into closer association with the imperial government. During the remaining four years of Conservative Government from 1876 to 1880, no further political reform of any importance could be expected; even so, the junior member from Birmingham found it worth while to devote his attention to minor bills which would extend the privileges of the working man in the exercise of the franchise. In 1879, he supported a bill which proposed to extend the hours of polling in all boroughs from 8 A. M. to 8 P. M. He contended that under the existing regulations a large number of the working class were prevented from voting and that many of those going to the polls lost time and money. He asked of the House the affirmation of the principle that there should be no unnecessary obstacles interposed to the exercise of the franchise. Though Chamberlain very nearly carried this important bill, the Tories were successful in resisting the second reading, ostensibly on the ground that the late hour would increase facilities

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Nov. 13, 1872, Mar. 20, 1874; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 20 (1873), p. 294.

for rioting.<sup>1</sup> A resolution directing the attention of Parliament to the restricted nature of the borough franchise in Ireland likewise received his cordial support. In debate on the University of Ireland Education Bill he again voiced his opposition to cumulative voting, as "he believed it to be a thoroughly unsound principle, especially unsound when applied to educational matters on which there were often great differences of opinion".<sup>2</sup>

The accession of the Liberals to power in 1880 led, within the next three years, to a revival of agitation for political reform. Chamberlain especially desired to reveal to the people the dependence of social reform upon the extension of the franchise. In a speech at Bristol in 1883 he forcibly expressed this conviction:

What is the subject which is the root of all others and the settlement of which will give the greatest possible stimulus to all the reforms which the Liberal party have in their heart to carry? That subject is Reform, Reform in all its branches; but first and foremost the extension of the suffrage. . . . Great social questions, which are every day becoming more important, can only be satisfactorily settled when the whole of the people take a part in the work of legislation. The complete establishment of religious equality, the freedom of education in our national schools, the improvement of the condition of the agricultural labourers, the popular control of the liquor traffic, and such a readjustment of taxation as will proportion its burdens to the means and ability of the taxpayer—these are questions upon which I believe the great majority of the people are agreed, but whose solution is of necessity delayed until all the people are taken into counsel.<sup>3</sup>

For the attainment of this goal in social politics, it was

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 246 (1879), pp. 1650-1659.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 243 (1879), pp. 1240, 1241, vol. 249, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Boyd, Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, pp. 106, 114.

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<sup>3</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, pp. 106, 114.

therefore essential to extend liberally the limits of political equality. He agreed with Lord Salisbury in his observation that he was opposed to "this perpetual tinkering with the Constitution". But whereas he supposed that Lord Salisbury would avoid tinkering with the Constitution by letting it alone until it fell to pieces, he would deal with the Constitution so effectually that it would never again require mending. He did not hesitate to advocate the principle of absolute manhood suffrage, contending that the wider the foundations and institutions were laid, the more stable those liberties and institutions would be. However, Chamberlain did not neglect to state that he was perfectly ready to admit that public opinion generally was not in favour of so considerable a change. Should his opinion prove to be right, he believed time and experience would bring conviction to those who were then in doubt. In the meantime, he was content to stand with the rest of the Liberal party in their pledge for the extension of household suffrage to the counties.<sup>1</sup>

Agitation for reform gave way to actual legislation with the introduction of the Representation of the People Bill by the Prime Minister in the spring of 1884. In the debate on the second reading, Chamberlain gave able expression to a most neglected yet important side of the case—the real need of the agricultural labourer for protection by Parliament. He denounced in his most vigorous manner the wrongs which had been committed against the labourer because of his lack of opportunity to defend himself. The enclosure of the public lands, the misappropriation of the endowments of the poor, were wrongs which would never have been committed had the tiller of the soil had a voice in the House, and been able to speak in his own behalf.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 111. Chamberlain had declared himself in favour of universal suffrage in the Sheffield election speech of 1874. *Post*, Jan. 2, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 286 (1884), pp. 955-957.

The enfranchisement of two million agricultural labourers accomplished by the passage of the Act did not eliminate entirely the question of political reform from Chamberlain's programme. In one of his most famous speeches before his constituents at Birmingham, he directed their attention to two other points which he hoped might receive early consideration. His interest in the direct representation of labour in Parliament led him to propose the adoption of the old constitutional system of payment of members, in order that subsistence might be provided for men of the working class if summoned to Westminster. Since the ministers of the Crown received compensation, he could not understand why members of Parliament should be the only people to work for nothing. A second anomaly which should be removed was the plural representation of property owners. To this he objected *in toto*, and declared in favour of the principle of "one man, one vote". If a distinction were to be made, he was not certain but that the poor man ought to have more votes than the rich one.<sup>1</sup>

A few months later he protested against the action of the Tories in the House of Lords in making the receipt of medical relief a disqualification for the franchise. By this provision, he believed that about one-fourth of those whom they sought to enfranchise would be kept from the enjoyment of their electoral rights.<sup>2</sup> However, none of these

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-154. Chamberlain had previously spoken in behalf of payment of members in Parliament at the John Bright Celebration in Birmingham. *Times*, June 14, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 135. This medical relief amendment to the Registration Occupation Voters Bill of 1885 was accepted by the House of Commons upon the recommendation of the Attorney-General, Sir Henry James, and Sir Charles Dilke. Its rejection would doubtless have meant that the entire bill would have been lost. Had that happened, the local officials would have been powerless to register the householders in the counties. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 298 (1885), pp. 957-970.

protests or radical opinions expressed before the public were of sufficient significance to result in any action by Parliament. On the whole, Chamberlain appeared to be quite satisfied with the advance made in parliamentary reform, and his chief desire was to make effective use of the new representation for the enactment of much-needed social legislation.

The course of the franchise bill through Parliament suggested to nearly every Radical statesman the desirability of another political reform—the reform of the House of Lords. Ever since the beginning of his political career Chamberlain's attitude towards the Upper House, which he had at one time referred to as an "effete institution", had not been sympathetic. When the Irish Church Bill was before the Legislature in 1869, an adverse vote by the Lords was much feared by the Liberal party. Consequently, in the agitation which developed in support of the proposed legislation, the peers were denounced with great severity. At a public meeting held in the Town Hall of Birmingham in June of that year, Chamberlain did not temper his words with any spirit of moderation. Referring to the resistance which the Bill had aroused in the Upper House, he said emphatically that the opposing Lords represented three things. In the first place, some of them, at least, represented the oppression of the feudal lords in times gone by when the people were expected to be grateful for the privilege of being ruled by an aristocracy. In the second place, they represented the wealth acquired by the possession of land in the vicinity of towns like Birmingham or Manchester, which had enriched the proprietors without care or labour on their part. And lastly, they represented, though very imperfectly, the intelligence and the acquirements of ancestors long since dead, who had unfortunately been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which



they had risen. His derogatory comments concluded with a reference to the words of Lord Bacon whom he regarded as the greatest member that had ever sat in the House of Lords. This worthy peer had remarked that it was customary to say in his time that the Lords were like potatoes, the best part of them was underground.<sup>1</sup> The favourable vote of the privileged House on the second reading of the Bill, and their later acceptance of Gladstone's proposals on the question of disendowment removed the cause for extreme displeasure on the part of the Lords' opponents; nevertheless, it was impossible to quell entirely the antagonistic spirit which had taken root. Two years later, the hostility was revived by their rejection of the Ballot Bill, with the result that the *Spectator* suggested the abolition of the Upper Chamber by act of Parliament. It is not surprising, therefore, that at a Reform Conference held in Birmingham in December, 1871, Chamberlain remarked that it seemed to him that the best reform of the House of Lords would be a reform that reformed it altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Over a decade passed before his ire was again kindled against the "citadel of privilege". In 1884, the masses of England indignantly protested against the action of the Lords in rejecting the Representation of the People Bill unless a scheme dealing with the redistribution of seats were coupled with it. During the debate on the measure in the House, Chamberlain had questioned its fate, as it was to go "to a strange and inhospitable country from which it might never, perhaps, safely return", but when the bold action of a few hundred of the privileged order actually thwarted the wishes of the millions represented by the Com-

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, June 15, 1869; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii, pp. 266-280; Gardiner, A. G., *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 2 vols. (London, 1923), vol. i, p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Dec. 7, 1871; *Spectator*, vol. 44 (1871), p. 972.

mons, the Radical Member of Birmingham in common with his constituents was "thirsting for the blood of the Lords". In his indignation, he became one of the most prominent leaders in strengthening the agitation of the people of England against the action of "that club of Tory landlords which in its gilded chamber had disposed of the welfare of the people with almost exclusive regard to the interests of a class".<sup>1</sup> Among his friends in the Midland city, he uttered one of his most severe indictments against the privileged order when he said:

During the last one hundred years the House of Lords has never contributed one iota to popular liberties or popular freedom, or done anything to advance the common weal, and during that time it has protected every abuse and sheltered every privilege. It has denied justice and delayed reform. It is irresponsible without independence, obstinate without courage, arbitrary without judgment, and arrogant without knowledge; and now it has deliberately challenged the verdict of the people in contempt of the House of Commons, and in defiance of the popular opinion which it represents. This mechanical majority of the Tory caucus stands between two millions of people and the possession of their political rights.<sup>2</sup>

In his opinion, as well as in the opinion of many a less radical representative, the cup was nearly full and the career of high-handed wrong was coming to an end. But eventually compromise ended the bitter strife between peer and commoner; the immediate grievance was removed and Chamberlain, as a practical politician, was not inclined to waste his energy on the abstract.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, when his

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 290 (1884), p. 480, vol. 286, p. 944; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. ii, pp. 64, 65; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, pp. 124-139; Lucy, *op. cit.*, pp. 96, 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Aug. 5, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Milner and Others, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 95.

radicalism was given full expression in the unauthorized programme of 1885, the reform of the House of Lords was not one of the items included. His sentiment on the question was quite likely that expressed in *The Radical Programme*: "No one now menaces the peers with disestablishment, because they have acquiesced in the national will." In the autumn of the election year when he conferred with Gladstone relative to the starting of a future Liberal Government, the elder statesman reported that Chamberlain regarded the question of the House of Lords as still lying in the remote distance.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far, Chamberlain had been associated with that political party in which had centered for generations all opposition to the privileged chamber; in 1886 he began his affiliation with that party in Parliament which stood for "the King, the Peers, and the Established Church". The House of Lords which he had described in the days of the unauthorized programme as "the obsequious handmaid of the Tory party" was no longer to oppose uncompromisingly his radical views. When he succeeded in winning over his Conservative friends to his advanced ideas, acceptance on the part of the Upper House invariably followed. As a result, Chamberlain's attitude toward the much-denounced institution assumed an entirely different aspect. The feeling of hostility had given way to one of sympathetic appreciation, when at the Home Rule crisis of 1893, it "cavalierly rejected" a measure which he himself had so strongly denounced. In his opinion, the Lords then represented the true wishes of the majority of the people just as, in 1884, he believed they were opposing their wishes. He still held that he had no objection to any reasonable reform of the House of Lords which would give it greater authority and a more representative character; such reform, however, one

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, p. 23; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 225.

could not expect to become part of his programme, and as a strong upholder of a second chamber he showed his loyalty to the existing organization when he announced, "Until you find me a better one I am going to stick to the House of Lords". Apparently Chamberlain had not been able to forget the uncomplimentary remarks which he had made in his Radical days; many years later when again speaking of the benefits which had been conferred by the Lords in their rejection of Home Rule, he apologetically added, "I plead that in this recognition I am making some amends for anything said on past occasions I may wish to have forgotten". Reliance on the hereditary chamber was still evidenced as late as 1909 when the ardent tariff reformer from his retirement at Highbury wrote at the time of the Budget controversy that he hoped the House of Lords would see their way clear to force an election. Only one alternative—that of Tariff Reform—was offered, and between the two he asked that the Lords should choose. Chamberlain lived to see the peers deprived of much of their power by the Parliament Act of 1911. Nevertheless, the privileged chamber still exists to fulfill the prophecy of the Liberal Unionist leader who said in 1892: "Although the House of Peers is a good deal threatened nowadays, in all probability it will outlive most of us, and will remain for several generations to come a picturesque and a stately, if not a supremely important, part of the British Constitution."<sup>1</sup>

When the agitation for parliamentary reform was renewed by the Liberals in 1891, Chamberlain was firm in his conviction that the time had not yet come for a new reform bill. This position was consistent with a remark made before the House in 1884 when he had referred to

<sup>1</sup>Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 227; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 30 (1895), p. 849; *Times*, Mar. 23, Nov. 23, Oct. 17, 1894, Oct. 26, 1901, Mar. 21, 1892, Dec. 17, 1909; Milner and Others, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 65.

the proposed franchise measure. The bill which should be introduced would be such a great and generous measure of reform, that even if it did not entirely remove the existing anomalies, it should do so to such an extent as to settle the question for their time and generation and leave no room for further agitation. Chamberlain, however, did not refrain from making further suggestions, soon after the enactment of the Act, as to enlarging its scope.<sup>1</sup> Again in the 'nineties he reaffirmed his opposition to plural voting and his continued belief in manhood suffrage, payment of members, and equal electoral districts; nevertheless, he held that it was the will of the majority of the country to proceed with social legislation made possible by the reform measures of 1884-1885, rather than to deal with further constitutional changes. It was not his will that long and considerable delay should take place in an effort to establish "one man, one vote, a reform so minute in its effect upon the Constitution that he should call it a pettifogging reform". If attention were to be devoted to the subject, he stood rather for "one vote, one value", whereby a distribution of seats according to population would result in a decrease of the Irish representation. Though his faith in the efficacy of manhood suffrage had weakened, on the last issue he was only reaffirming his position of 1884 when he had declared in Parliament that though he favoured equal electoral districts, his real concern was that equal value should be given to every vote in every case.<sup>2</sup> His position as to payment of members was reversed a few years later. In referring to a bill which would provide compensation for representatives in the House of Commons, he remarked:

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 351 (1891), p. 81, vol. 286 (1884), p. 949; cf. *supra*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 351 (1891), pp. 71, 83, vol. 286 (1884), pp. 961, 962; *Times*, Apr. 22, 1891, June 8, 1892.

"This is a proposal to take £250,000 a year out of the pockets of the people in order to pay 670 members, 600 of whom do not want any pay at all."<sup>1</sup>

Extension of the franchise had not as yet involved any serious consideration of the political rights of women; yet since the publication of John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women* in 1869, the question could not be entirely ignored by prominent statesmen. At the time of Chamberlain's first contest for a seat in Parliament in 1874, he had presided over a Woman Suffrage meeting in Birmingham Town Hall, where he announced a general sympathy with the principle of female suffrage though he had never taken any active part in that question. In expressing the hope that manhood suffrage would become one of the first items of the Liberal programme, he added that he had never been able to find sufficient arguments based on logic, justice, or reason for making a distinction between the sexes in this respect.<sup>2</sup> Early in his parliamentary career, he registered the same opinion when a division took place on removing the political disabilities of women.<sup>3</sup> When Chamberlain was a member of Gladstone's Cabinet in 1884, it became necessary for him again to take a stand on the question. An amendment for the extension of the franchise to women had been proposed when the Representation of the People Act was under consideration. Sir Charles Dilke had so ardently supported the cause up to this time that he felt

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Nov. 23, 1894; see also *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), p. 688; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 10 (1893), p. 593. Cf. *infra*, pp. 254, 255, on payment of members in relation to the representation of labour.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Jan. 23, 1874. At a meeting of the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society, May 8, 1872, the subject debated was that the legal, social and political position of women was unjust and unmoral *Post*, May 9, 1872. Chamberlain was present at a conference on Woman Suffrage in December, 1872, but did not take any part in the proceedings. *Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 1872.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 240 (1878), p. 1872.

under obligation to record his vote in its favour though the "cabinet was dead against woman suffrage". His position involved a controversy as to his retaining his seat in the Government, and though the crisis was successfully passed over, Dilke recorded in his "Manuscript Memoir" the strong support he had received from Chamberlain *who differed from him about woman suffrage* and regretted the course his friend had felt obliged to take.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is clear that prior to severing his connexion with the Liberal party, Chamberlain allied himself with the Cabinet members against giving the ballot to women, whatever may have been his personal views on the subject. Seven years later when he had become a Liberal Unionist, he admitted publicly in a speech at Birmingham that he had changed his opinion on woman suffrage, and referring to the division on the subject which had taken place many years before, he gave the following explanation:

My friend, Sir Charles Dilke, was strongly in favour of it, and not having carefully considered the matter, I followed him into the lobby, but from that time—1876 or 1877—up to the present day I have never voted for women's suffrage, and I admit that I am, after full consideration, opposed to it, quite as much, I believe, in the interests of women as in the interests of men.<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless party relationships in the 'eighties and 'nineties were factors in determining Chamberlain's position on the question of parliamentary reform, yet it is quite likely that this progressive statesman in common with many others was coming to see that the extension of the fran-

<sup>1</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Feb. 23, 1891. Chamberlain doubtless was referring to the division in 1878; the division on woman suffrage taken in 1876 was prior to his entrance into Parliament; no division was taken in 1877. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 228 (1876), p. 1741, vol. 234 (1877), pp. 1362-1415, vol. 240 (1878), p. 1872.

chise was not a solution of every problem. A beneficent use of the constitutional powers already in possession of Parliament was in his mind the best means of increasing the welfare of the people of the Empire.

During Chamberlain's parliamentary career, both Tory and Liberal statesmen were concerned with a second phase of political reform—that of enlarging the sphere of local government. The former Mayor of Birmingham who had been the first person to enter the House of Commons with the prestige of a municipal reformer came to be the recognized champion of the larger rights of local authorities. Active participation in local affairs for over a decade gave him the right to speak authoritatively on the importance of this reform, and to insist that the solution of the great social questions was to be found in the creation and extension of a satisfactory system of local government. He was firmly of the opinion that the domestic happiness and welfare of the people of England depended much more upon the parochial administration than it did upon the imperial Parliament. That which was of greatest value to the working man—his health and his life—was almost entirely dependent upon the local administration of the district in which he lived. Therefore, the reform of local administration was contingent upon the character of the authorities established to carry out such work. Furthermore, he believed that local government provided the best political education for the people, because it afforded to the man who was willing and had ability an opportunity to serve those among whom he lived, and enabled him to gratify a worthy and honourable ambition.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, when Chamberlain entered Parliament in

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 42 (1884), pp. 720, 721; Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 153; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 21 (1894), p. 820; Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 144.



1876, he became not only the spokesman of his own constituency in behalf of the enlargement of its municipal privileges but also the champion of every local community, to the end that the rights already enjoyed by the larger centers of population might be extended to the rural districts. His interest extended beyond those bills definitely designated as local government measures to any legislation which seemed to indicate either the opportunity for extending its scope or the possibility of its infringing upon the prerogatives already possessed by the local authority.

The Prisons Bill introduced by the Conservative Government in 1877 for the transfer of the control of local prisons from the justices to the Home Office, provided Chamberlain an occasion for a protest in behalf of his constituency. Though he felt an admiration for the three objects the Home Secretary had in view—the saving in respect to local rates, the abolition of unnecessary gaols, and the correction of certain anomalies in connexion with prison labour—he felt that the purchase price for the latter was too high, since it would be at the expense of a distinct slur on local government and management. He objected to the patronage of local prison institutions being vested in the hands of imperial officials. The dignity of local life in Birmingham and other communities would also suffer from the transfer of financial arrangements from the local authorities to the Prison Commission. In consideration of these facts, he refused to support the second reading of the Bill.<sup>1</sup>

The indebtedness of local authorities was another question which he viewed from an entirely different angle from that of many of the parliamentary representatives. His experience had been unique in that he had played the first

<sup>1</sup> 40 and 41 Vict., c. 21; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 232 (1877), pp. 436-439. This was Chamberlain's second speech before the House, concerning which Lucy has written a very interesting comment in his *Memories of Eight Parliaments*, pp. 172, 173.

role in the city of Birmingham in increasing the local debt from something like £600,000 in 1875 to nearly £5,000,000 in 1877. This fact was the strongest vindication of his belief that the indebtedness of local authorities was a "matter of congratulation rather than fear", since it was an investment for the benefit of the whole community, and frequently was at a very remunerative interest. The rapidly increasing amount of indebtedness, he explained, was due to the acquisition of public utilities, sanitary undertakings and schools, a part of which might be treated as investments and not as loans for ordinary expenditure.<sup>1</sup> That Parliament should make any attempt to curb the local authorities in their expenditure for such praiseworthy objects was by no means desirable to one maintaining such a position. In debate on the Public Works Consolidated Fund Bill of 1877, he disagreed with those who complained as to the length of time for repayment of local loans. He urged, on the contrary, that loans for a long period such as fifty years should be made to local authorities at a low rate of interest.<sup>2</sup> The following year he again attempted to allay the apparent alarm of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the local indebtedness of the country, and to defend the claims of the local authorities upon the Exchequer to receive money at low rates for public purposes. He explained that he could not see any reason for fear since no local body was indebted to more than twice the amount of its actual rates, or, in other words, to more than one-tenth of the total value of the property which remained as security for money so lent. As long as they had security which was worth ten times the amount lent, he felt there was not the slightest danger that the Public Exchequer would suffer. Such an

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 233 (1877), pp. 1726, 1727, vol. 239 (1878), p. 602.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 233 (1877), pp. 1727, 1728.

improvement as had been undertaken in Birmingham under the Artisans' Dwelling Act would be impossible without loans from the Public Works Loan Commissioners at a low rate of interest.<sup>1</sup>

A more serious situation developed at the very close of the parliamentary session of 1879 when the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed in the Public Works Loans Bill to limit loans to local authorities and to increase the rate of interest charged because an investigation of loans made since the inauguration of the system in 1792 had disclosed extensive losses to the State.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain objected most vehemently to the Bill, which he characteristically described as "meddle and muddle legislation". He was willing to admit that the continued and rapid growth of loans to local authorities required the consideration of the Government and that conditions under which loans were granted might be advantageously revised; but he could not discover in the Bill before the House a reasonable solution of the problem, since it would tend to increase the burdens of the local bodies throughout the country, and without any sufficient necessity or proportionate gain or advantage. By the method proposed of limiting the amount to be lent to any single authority, he believed the Government would be deprived of its best and safest customers, as it was possible

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 239 (1878), pp. 601-603.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 249 (1879), pp. 601-611. The exact proposal was that in the future the State should ask three and a half per cent if the loan was for a short period not exceeding twenty years; three and three-fourths per cent for a loan which was to be repaid under thirty years; four per cent for any period between thirty and forty years; and four and a half per cent for any loan lent for a period of more than forty years. The Chancellor of the Exchequer further proposed that no body should receive from the State in any one year more than £100,000. He observed in this connexion that Birmingham had asked for a sum of a million and a half in one application, and that other towns had been incited to compete with Birmingham in this respect. *Ibid.*, pp. 605, 606.

to obtain the best security for the larger sums borrowed on a long term. Nor did he consider it reasonable that the Government by the proposed restrictions should practically deprive the Public Works Loans Commissioners of all powers of discretion that they had hitherto exercised. He also called the attention of the House to the fact that the measure would affect very materially the operation of a large number of separate and distinct acts in both England and Ireland. Such legislation as the Education Act of 1870, the Artisans' Dwelling Act of 1875, and the Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875 encouraged and in many cases forced the local authorities to undertake various schemes of improvement while the proposed Bill would make impossible any large expenditure for such purposes. He therefore concluded:

If you want to stop local expenditure, reverse this legislation. Repeal the education measures, and the sanitary arrangements which make drainage compulsory. Reverse all these; repeal them if you can; and then you may talk about economy to local authorities. The expenditure is necessary. . . . As a matter of fact, the expenditure by local authorities is increasing and ought to increase. We are every year advancing in civilisation; new demands are arising. The present generation would not be satisfied to rest under circumstances which contented our "wiser" ancestors. They would not be satisfied with boroughs where all provisions for proper sanitary conditions and a satisfactory water supply were neglected. Under these circumstances, it is absurd to, at the same time, expect these provisions should be made by local authorities, and then to complain of the expense which it involves.

After a long discussion in Committee, the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to accept an amendment proposed by Chamberlain whereby the Treasury was allowed discretion as to the rates charged to local authorities, under the con-

dition that the loans should be made without loss to the Exchequer. Chamberlain was also assured that the measure would not interfere with the system of loans by which the Corporation of Birmingham was enabled to carry out its great improvement scheme. Certain other favourable amendments having been accepted, the Bill was passed by the House.<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative Government of this period also ventured upon a reform of local government in introducing the County Government Bill of 1878. The measure proposed the creation of a new county board which would share in the administrative duties then performed by the court of quarter session. The election of the majority of members of this executive body was not to be placed directly in the hands of the people, but was to be vested in the elective guardians of the rural parishes within the petty sessional divisions of the county. Such an arrangement did not conform at all to Chamberlain's ideas as to what county government should be. The good intentions of the Government in introducing the Bill were questioned. In fact, the *Spectator* characterized it as a "measure only brought in to please the farmers", but Chamberlain in his introductory remarks said that if the farmers were willing to accept such a sop to Cerberus as was contained in the Bill, he should think they were the most readily contented and least exacting of all Her Majesty's subjects. In the first place,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 611-623, 783, 791-800, 910; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1878-1879, vol. v, p. 481. The limitation of £100,000 which could be borrowed by the local body was not changed. 42 and 43 Vict., c. 77. This clause was not repealed until 1897. 60 and 61 Vict., c. 51 s. 12 (4). When Chamberlain testified before the Housing Commission in 1884, he explained that great advance had been made in enabling corporations of large towns to borrow almost as cheaply as the State could lend to them. Smaller corporations, however, were still at a disadvantage. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-1885, vol. 30, p. 447.

the Bill did not meet what he considered the first requisite of such a measure—the simplification of the existing system and the concentration of the work of present minor areas. In order to attract the services of the most efficient administrators of the area, it was also essential that the district should be of sufficient importance and size to lend a dignity and importance to the work to be performed. In the Bill to be introduced, he found only a further complication of the Constitution and the practical abolition of the historical and time-honoured institution, the court of quarter sessions.

Chamberlain's main line of attack, however, was directed against the entire disregard of the principle of direct representation. In support of this principle he desired to place before the House an amendment to the effect that no reform of county government would be permanent or satisfactory which did not entrust the administration of the county business to a board elected directly by household franchise. At that time, a division upon it was not allowed. At all events, he did not forego the opportunity to criticize the board to be created by the Bill—a creation which in his opinion would be “a mere thing of shreds and patches”. As he aptly expressed it: “The representative principle, which is almost conspicuous by its absence, is diluted by the *ex-officio* elements filtered through intermediate bodies; it is impeded by voting powers, it is nullified by property qualifications, and it is minimized by the system of plural voting”. The nearest approach to the constitution of the new authority he recognized in the local institutions of Russia where a system of elections—half by peasants and half by landlords, coupled with a method of double elections—was in use. A county board elected by household franchise would pave the way through the medium of local affairs for the training of those who were likely to become the electors of the future. Besides, he

held that it was not fair to ignore persistently the interests of the agricultural labourer, who since he had no representative in the House was certainly entitled to a share in local government affairs. It was inevitable that the board which they were creating would be entrusted in the future with much larger and more varied functions than was provided in the Bill—powers touching the personal liberty and freedom of the individual, such as sanitary measures, education, the control of the police—and in consideration of these prospects, the new authority should represent the interests of those whom it would serve. The Bill did not arouse any particular enthusiasm even within the Conservative ranks and was eventually withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

To another project, the Metropolis Waterworks Purchase Bill, introduced by the Home Secretary shortly before the dissolution of Parliament in 1880, Chamberlain gave his cordial support. He was gratified that the principles laid down by Secretary Cross were identical with those which had guided the Corporation of Birmingham in the transfer of the waterworks during his mayoralty. He realized the magnitude of the undertaking, yet in consideration of the immense advantages to be derived, he wished every success to the scheme. After the first reading, further procedure was prevented by the close of the parliamentary session within a few weeks.<sup>2</sup>

When in the autumn of 1879 there were indications of an approaching general election, Chamberlain designated

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 237 (1878), pp. 1886-1889, vol. 238, pp. 908-915, vol. 241, p. 1462; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1878, vol. i, pp. 543-579; *Spectator*, vol. 51 (1878), p. 718. Chamberlain's reference to Russian local government is probably intended to apply to the zemstvo, although to be exact, it was not a "system of elections—half by peasants and half by landlords." Vinogradoff, Paul, *Self-Government in Russia* (London, 1915), pp. 56-58.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 251 (1880), pp. 237, 238.

county government reform as one of the three great questions waiting for solution by the Liberal party. But in the election address by the leader of the Liberals, the attention of his constituents was focused upon the ministerial misdeeds of the Conservative Government; as to the domestic legislation of the future—"the address was a perfect blank".<sup>1</sup> The overthrow of the Tories, therefore, did not give rise to any immediate consideration of the problems of local government. During the latter half of Gladstone's Ministry, however, there was continuous discussion behind the scenes of two important measures of local government reform, the one for London and the other for the country.<sup>2</sup> Official sanction of such proposed legislation was recognized by its inclusion in the Queen's Speech of 1884.<sup>3</sup> Toward the fulfillment of these pledges, Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, introduced the London Government Bill in April of that year. Though Chamberlain's energies were necessarily concentrated at the Board of Trade, fragmentary records show his position upon the measure. A year earlier in a speech at Swansea, he had made favourable reference to such a bill which would probably be introduced by the Home Secretary early in the session. But a year was to elapse before an opportunity was afforded for its presentation.

The London Government Bill of 1884 provided for setting up a Central Municipality in London to supplant the archaic constitution of the Metropolis with its thirty-eight districts and vestries, which had in the course of years de-

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Nov. 12, 1879; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 607. The other questions to which Chamberlain had referred were representation reform and the reform of the land laws.

<sup>2</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-15.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 284 (1884), p. 7. The actual presentation of other local government bills than that for the Metropolis was made conditional upon the progress of parliamentary business.



prived the city of coherence, energy and sense of unity. The whole original authority was to be vested in a Common Council which should exercise supervision over and cooperate with the district councils in the various municipal areas. Gardiner's *Life of Sir William Harcourt* has supplied illuminating information regarding Chamberlain's position on the measure. A letter from Harcourt to his son stated that Dilke, Chamberlain and other good judges were pleased with the Bill. But the author adds the following comment:

The approval of Chamberlain had, however, only been won after a struggle. There had been much discussion and correspondence between the two on the character of the New London which the Bill was to establish. Harcourt was for one London, with the City Corporation reformed and popularly elected, operating over the whole metropolitan area. Chamberlain was hostile to enhancing the authority of the City Corporation, and favoured a central City Council, with borough councils elected at the same time. In the end, however, he approved of Harcourt's Bill, which he said would strike the imagination as a great scheme.<sup>1</sup>

Difficulties in the House of Commons clouded the prospects of the Bill, so that it was withdrawn after a lengthy debate on the second reading.

Meanwhile, Sir Charles Dilke, Chamberlain's Radical colleague in the Cabinet, was labouring diligently for local government reform in the counties. In 1883 Chamberlain had referred to this reform as a part of the programme which might be expected from the Liberal party; yet he made it plain that if time were wanting, he should not object to its postponement until after the extension of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 287 (1884), pp. 41-69, vol. 290, p. 666; Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

the county franchise, since a really satisfactory and final settlement of the question required that those concerned should be consulted in its preparation.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, he was furthering the cause by acting as a member of the Local Government Committee of which Dilke was chairman. Since the Committee represented varying opinions, agreement in the drafting of a satisfactory measure was by no means easy, but eventually a draft was completed. The parliamentary situation, however, prevented progress with such a large measure of reform, even in its preliminary stages. Chamberlain's membership on this Committee was without doubt significant, since the discussion in the drafting of a bill could not have failed to temper his views when he later played an important part in putting through the Local Government Act of 1888.<sup>2</sup>

After the passage of the Representation of the People Act of 1884, extending the county franchise, Chamberlain proceeded to attack the local government problem with enthusiasm. In behalf of this reform, the burden of his argument in his numerous speeches on the unauthorized programme of 1885 rested upon the contention that the alleviation of social ills was dependent upon a satisfactory system of local self-government. He said in an address at Holloway in June of that year:

I believe that the first duty and the chief legislation of the new

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12. The other members of the Committee were Lord Kimberley, Mr. Childers, Lord Carlingford, Mr. Dodson, Lord Edward Fitzmaurice, Sir Henry Thring and Mr. Hugh Owen. Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Kimberley and Lord Fitzmaurice were supporters of the large bill which the chairman had prepared, while Mr. Dodson and Lord Carlingford favoured piecemeal and gradual reform. According to Gwynn & Tuckwell's *Life of Dilke*, the Bill of 1884 contained almost everything found in the two great government measures of 1888 and 1894.

Parliament will be the completion and extension of our system of local government. That is a necessary preliminary to almost any change in other directions. Temperance reform, the reform of taxation, and the great social questions which are pressing for solution, all depend on the creation and extension of satisfactory local government. Local government is the system whereby alone, as I believe, these matters may be properly and effectively dealt with. It is by this means only that we can hope to confront the destitution and the misery and the disease and the crime which are the great blots on our civilisation. The health and the comfort of the poor in our midst, their means of education, their opportunities of enjoyment—all these may be provided and increased by the intelligent cooperation of all the citizens for the common good; and if the functions of local government are increased, I believe we might do something to grapple with these great and lamentable evils.<sup>1</sup>

In the election campaign of 1885 following the dissolution of Parliament in August, Chamberlain was in accord with his party in advocating this phase of domestic policy. The reform of local government was definitely referred to in Gladstone's election manifesto as an important portion of the unfulfilled work which should be given the consideration of the next Parliament. The recognized leader of the Liberals there characterized it as a vital subject which he believed to lie at the root of all their liberties. In correspondence with Gladstone immediately preceding this address, Chamberlain had stipulated that increased powers to local authorities was one of the conditions upon which he and his friend Dilke could offer to support or join a future Government. The election manifesto, therefore, afforded him some satisfaction on this subject, though the address as a whole was by no means to his liking, as was clearly indicated in a subsequent letter to Gladstone. A few weeks later, Chamberlain was called into consultation with the

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 153. See also *ibid.*, pp. 110, 144.

Liberal leader at Hawarden, and again increased powers to local authorities were emphasized by the Radical statesman as one of the points indispensable to the starting of a Liberal Government. Gladstone's letter to Lord Granville reporting the conversation showed that greater harmony existed between the two men than formerly; he stated, however, that it was not his intention to undertake the leadership of the party for the accomplishment of any vast programme of domestic legislation on which he felt he could render no special service. He might be able, should a big Irish question arise in such a form as to promise a possibility of settlement, to supply such service as could not be supplied otherwise. Regardless of these opinions expressed in private conversation, sufficient emphasis had been placed upon domestic reform in Gladstone's manifesto to cause Chamberlain to feel that the election was fought and won, not on the Irish question, but on a programme which would further the social and economic advancement of the people of England. Therefore, he was eager that local government as one phase of social reform should be given the attention of the Ministry. His vital interest in the question was manifested in his acceptance of the presidency of the Local Government Board<sup>1</sup> in the memorable session of 1886. As events developed, the great Irish question overshadowed all other subjects and precluded all possibility of local government legislation; but the president of the Board was afforded an opportunity in his short term of office to inform the Commons as to the Government programme in relation to

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Sept. 19, 1885; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-187; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, pp. 224-226, 294. The Admiralty post was declined by Chamberlain partly on the ground that the chief of the fighting and spending departments was not the post for one who had just given a paramount place to domestic reforms in his stirring addresses to the country. *Ibid.*, p. 294; Chamberlain, J., *Home Rule and the Irish Question*, pp. 151, 152.

his Department. Shortly after the Liberals had acceded to power, he stated, in reply to questions from members of the House, that it was the intention of the Government to introduce at the earliest possible moment a bill dealing with county government. When local government legislation was actually before Parliament in 1888, Chamberlain referred to the bill he had prepared three years before—a bill which was never completed or submitted to the House “because the Government of the day thought it right to throw aside that measure, with all other items of the programme upon which they had been elected, in order to take up a new programme upon which the country had not been consulted”.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Irish question, provoking as it did party discord and necessitating the reorganization of political forces, resulted in a postponement of local government. To be sure, the subject was not one which could be entirely ignored, since both parties had been pledged to deal with that reform. In fact, local government legislation was promised by the Tory Government in the Queen's Speeches of the years 1886, 1887 and 1888, and the Local Government Board during these years was giving effect to these pledges to the extent of proceeding with the drafting of a bill.<sup>2</sup> But the essential point was that such a measure when it was brought before Parliament should be sufficiently complete as to provide a satisfactory settlement of the question. Statements made in the “Manuscript Memoir” of Sir Charles Dilke lead one to believe that Chamberlain played an important part in securing a truly effective measure.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 302 (1886), p. 894, vol. 324 (1888), p. 1356.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 302 (1886), p. 35, vol. 310 (1887), p. 5, vol. 322 (1888), pp. 4, 5. Ritchie in the speech on the first reading of the Local Government Bill of 1888 referred to “the first draft of our Bill eighteen months ago.” *Ibid.*, vol. 323 (1888), p. 1663.

During the autumn and winter of 1886-1887, Chamberlain was inclined to waver in his support of his Conservative allies and to consider reconciliation with the Liberal party. Lord Salisbury's acceptance of Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation from the Government especially disheartened him and caused him almost to despair of establishing a *modus vivendi* with the Tories. In his disgust at this turn of affairs in the Cabinet, he confided to Dilke that "he was anxious to defeat them on their Local Government Bill if it was not altered back again to suit his policy". Shortly after, a Round Table Conference was convened in an effort to bring about an adjustment of those policies which had rent asunder the Liberal party. Lord Hartington did not view with favour Chamberlain's part in the proceedings. Regarding Chamberlain's attitude toward Hartington, Dilke writes: "Chamberlain has threatened Hartington with the consequences if he, as he wants to, supports a reactionary Local Government Bill of Lord Salisbury's. Chamberlain has written to Salisbury as to this Local Government Bill and received a dilatory reply." Finally, however, a more favourable situation developed and a compromise on the Bill was arranged. When the reform measure was at last brought before the House in 1888, Chamberlain was able to announce with satisfaction to his fellow members that he thought the main principles of his draft bill of 1886 were in entire agreement with the proposed legislation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-267; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 324 (1888), p. 1357. Dilke in his "Memoir" did not seem to be in entire agreement with Chamberlain in this statement. Sir Charles objected to the Bill of 1888 since the county councils were more highly organized than the district councils, whereas in the Liberal scheme the reverse was the case. Even so, he recognized the influence of the Liberal bill which had lain accessible to the Conservative Government in an official pigeonhole. Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

The Local Government Bill of 1888 which was introduced by Mr. Ritchie, the President of the Local Government Board, in March of that year, proposed to extend to the counties the system of government which had worked so admirably in the towns. The old method of administration through the Crown was to be superseded by one of decentralization according to which the entire administration of the county, with the exception of education, the poor law and the police, was transferred from the country gentlemen to representative county councils. London and the ten largest boroughs were to be constituted as separate counties in which the democratic principle was also recognized. In the Metropolis, the Metropolitan Board of Works was to give way to a Central County Council, in the creation of which was seen a solution of the countless existing anomalies. The City should continue to exercise its authority, though certain changes were necessary to bring it into relationship with the county council. The original Bill also provided for the division of the county into urban and rural districts in which representative councils would be endowed with limited control of local affairs. The guardians of the old union, however, were to continue in their jurisdiction over the Poor Law. Such a measure, which in truth gave legislative sanction to a revolution, "was received by the Unionists with delight, by the Liberals with pleasure damped with envy and by Tories with rather mixed emotions". Chamberlain had reason to reassure himself of an earlier conviction that the death knell of the reactionary Tory policy had actually sounded.<sup>1</sup>

During the debate on the second reading, Chamberlain delivered a statesmanlike defense of the principle of the Government measure. He believed that the true test of the

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 323 (1888), pp. 1640-1682; *Spectator*, vol. 61 (1888), p. 401; *Times*, June 15, 1887.

measure was to be found in the real and practical assimilation of the old borough system to the new county; on the whole he was satisfied that this was accomplished in the proposed legislation. A new local authority would be created which would be "fully, frankly and completely popular and representative". He readily admitted that there were various subjects awaiting solution, which had not been included in the Bill, but in consideration of the complexity of the whole problem, he was content that the Government should not attempt "to overload the ship". In the case of the Poor Law, he would have favoured the inclusion of its administration in the work to be given to the new county councils; but in view of the fact that the Poor Law had been kept separate from ordinary municipal work for more than fifty years, he could not condemn the measure because it did not do more in respect to county than had been done for borough government. To one phase of Poor Law administration he especially directed the attention of the President of the Local Government Board. He requested that the power vested in the board of guardians to pay the school fees for children of indigent parents, might be handed over to the local council. In discussing the organization of the parish, he dissented from the opinion of a Liberal member who thought that it should be made the first unit of local government. Nevertheless, he was favourable to the idea that something should be done to give some sort of organization to the existing parishes, as he believed that a political education might thereby be provided for those who might have to take part in the work. He suggested a reorganization of the old vestry to which might be entrusted the management of purely parochial charities and parochial allotments, with the duty of protecting the footpaths in the parish, the open spaces and waste commons.



After considering the "principal sins of omission" charged against the Bill, Chamberlain dealt with "certain alleged sins of commission". He logically defended the proposal of the Government that one-fourth of the members of the county councils should be selected by the councillors, an adaptation from the old borough system. Though he admitted that he personally was opposed to the selection of municipal aldermen, yet he believed that the institution had given great satisfaction since it had often secured the presence of men on the council who were unwilling to undergo the continual fatigue and annoyance of public election. Therefore, he advised first the assimilation of the two systems, and indicated that, at a later date, improvements might be made in both at the same time. His only suggestion for the present would be the substitution of the term aldermen for the somewhat invidious name of "selected" councillors.

On the question of the control of the police, Chamberlain emphatically dissented from the views of the Government. Holding to the same argument he had used for the institution of aldermen in the county council, he maintained that since the borough councils had administered the police with signal efficiency, it was only reasonable that the new administrative authority of the county should be entrusted with the same power instead of placing its management in the hands of a joint committee of the county council and court of quarter sessions, as provided in the Bill. Conservatives quite likely felt that his radicalism was by no means decadent when he gave slight consideration to an objection offered, to the effect that the cession to the county council of the control of the police in England would necessitate similar legislation for Ireland at a later date. He frankly admitted that such a prospect did not greatly alarm him; that he was in favour of giving the control of the police to

all popularly elected bodies in Ireland as well as in England. On the contrary, he gave his hearty endorsement to the licensing clauses of the Bill which provided for the transfer of licenses from the imperial to the local authorities, and sanctioned the giving of compensation to publicans when the renewal of their licenses should be refused.<sup>1</sup>

However great may have been Chamberlain's influence in the preparation of the Local Government Bill, the measure as finally enacted leads to the inference that his main contribution during its progress in Parliament was his cordial endorsement of the principal Government proposals, rather than any modifications resulting from his suggestions before the House. To be sure, it is not possible to determine the subtle influence which he may have exerted behind the scenes, but in the House of Commons the Government did not consider it advisable to give effect to his more radical proposals. The President of the Local Government Board was willing to accept his minor recommendation that the term "alderman" should be adopted instead of that of "selected councillor", but a later suggestion that it might be advisable to eliminate entirely the office of alderman and substitute instead a council elected for a period of six years, one-third of whom should retire every two years, was not given consideration. Nor in more vital matters, such as the control of the police and the reorganization of the vestry, did the Government find it expedient to accept his propositions.<sup>2</sup> At all events, the Local Government Act of 1888, though necessarily incomplete in the fulfillment of all phases of local government reform, was a measure which did credit to the Conservative Government and their Liberal Unionist allies.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 324 (1888), pp. 1353-1368. For further discussion on the licensing clause, see chapter viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 326 (1888), p. 1856; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1888, vol. 4; 51 and 52 Vict., c. 41.

An effective system of representative government was accordingly established in the counties of England. The next step, which was especially desired by the more liberal members of Parliament, was its extension to the smaller areas of the country. The Government in 1888, owing to pressure of time, had withdrawn the clauses of the Local Government Bill providing for the organization of district councils. At the time of withdrawal, a pledge was given for the completion of the scheme of democratic control in the next session, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced later in the year that the Government would be unable to carry out their earlier intention.<sup>1</sup> When the Liberal party came into power in 1892, district councils had not yet been established. Mr. Fowler, the President of the Local Government Board, therefore, assumed the responsibility of completing the reconstruction of the system. In March, 1893, he introduced a bill for the establishment of representative parish and district councils. The parish as the primary unit of local administration in rural districts was made a living entity and was endowed with an extensive control of parochial affairs. For the organization of a larger area, the existing urban and rural sanitary authorities were constituted as district councils, to which were entrusted not only the local sanitary administration, but also the administration of the Poor Law.<sup>2</sup>

Although it is readily seen that the proposed measure differed considerably from Chamberlain's ideas of local self-government for the smaller areas, as expressed in debate on the Bill of 1888,<sup>3</sup> yet he offered no protest to the principle involved, and on one occasion assured the Government that he "objected altogether to be included in the

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 328 (1888), pp. 893, 1299-1302, vol. 332, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th ser., vol. 10 (1893), pp. 679-703.

<sup>3</sup> *Cf. supra*, p. 98.

Solicitor-General's list of opponents of the Bill".<sup>1</sup> However, he dissented decidedly from the Government in several proposals which were of vital importance. One of the most prolonged controversies developed in the discussion of those provisions relating to the temporary or permanent acquisition of land by the parish council for the purpose of making allotments. As Chamberlain's views on this subject form an important part of his land-reform policy, consideration of this phase of the debate will be deferred for later exposition.<sup>2</sup> A disagreement of lesser significance arose over the disposal of parochial charities. In the case of those charities which had been administered by trustees, he supported an amendment to the effect that they should be entrusted to the parish councils since it should be their privilege to deal with the property of those whom they represented. The Government proposition that popular control should be maintained by requiring the parish to elect a certain proportion of the trustees of a parochial charity did not meet at all with Chamberlain's approval. If this device was to be accepted, he insisted that the advisability of appointment should at least be left to the discretion of the council; his suggestion was eventually accepted by the Government. In debate on various amendments, he held firmly to his opinion that since councils were to be created the direct representatives of the parish, Parliament should show liberality in trusting such organizations and it should not hold them down to the minutest details of their administration.<sup>3</sup>

Though Chamberlain made this appeal for confidence in the parish council, his speeches do not reveal the same reli-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 19 (1893), p. 683.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 19 (1893), pp. 502-504, 742, 743, 889-891, vol. 21 (1894), pp. 1096-1098.

ance in the new board of guardians which was to be reconstructed along entirely representative lines.<sup>1</sup> Here he shared the fears of certain of his colleagues—that this body elected by a vast majority of persons who either paid no rates directly or who paid a very small proportion of the rates, might be tempted so to administer the Poor Law as to bring back the evils of an earlier day. He foresaw the possibility that a board of guardians, in order to satisfy the demands of its constituents, might be inclined to administer outdoor relief in a reckless spirit. To avert this possible danger, Chamberlain did not favour the retention of a limited number of *ex-officio* or nominated guardians. In lieu of a better proposal, he suggested that a proviso be introduced under which in cases where outdoor relief was granted in excess of a certain sum, the Local Government Board should have special powers of interference, either in the way of appointing guardians in the unions where such extravagance existed or in the way of making regulations to prevent the excessive giving of relief. The President of the Local Government Board was not inclined to share the fears of Chamberlain and his friends; and as a result the various remedies recommended were not given favourable consideration by the House.<sup>2</sup> Such differences, however, were to be expected from members of the party in opposition, especially from one who had decided opinions on the various issues involved, and who, furthermore, was not in a position to entertain the most cordial feeling toward the Liberal regime. Even so, on the whole, he was willing to regard the Bill in a non-contentious light and to recognize its possibilities for promoting the growth of a much-to-be-desired local interest and patriotism.

<sup>1</sup> The Bill provided that there should be no *ex-officio* or nominated guardians; all should be elected by popular franchise. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893, vol. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 20 (1894), pp. 271-319.

Reform in the Metropolis, another phase of local government, was still recognized by both parties as incomplete. The settlement arrived at in the Local Government Act of 1888 had created a central county council in London, but no adequate provision had been made for a reform of the local administrative authorities. In addition, the City, still in possession of its ancient prestige, had been left untouched in its non-administrative functions.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this situation, Gladstone's fourth Government, soon after its accession to power, appointed a Royal Commission to consider the proper conditions under which the amalgamation of the City and County of London could be effected, and to make specific proposals for that purpose. In August, 1894, the Commission presented its Report, recommending a new municipal Corporation of London, in which the areas of the County and City should be merged. The scheme provided that the common interests of the municipality should be vested in aldermen, representative councillors, and an elected Lord Mayor, while functions of a local administrative character were to be entrusted to district councils which would take the place as far as possible of the vestries and district boards. The Commission placed primary emphasis in all its recommendations upon the principle of solidarity for the Metropolis.<sup>2</sup> Naturally these proposals aroused the most strenuous opposition on the part of the City; as an alternative to the scheme presented by the Commission, the party in opposition prepared a bill dividing London into the City and thirteen municipalities. Two propositions were accord-

<sup>1</sup> 51 and 52 Vict., c. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1894, vol. 17, pp. 7-31. The Local Government Act of 1894 did not affect the problem of the Commission. No attempt was made in that measure to arrive at any complete settlement of London government; some improvement was accomplished by creating a more extended electorate for the various local authorities. 56 and 57 Vict., c. 73.

ingly before the Metropolis and the nation: the first, broadly speaking, supported by the Progressives of London and the Liberal party; the second, by the Moderates of London and the Conservatives, among whom Lord Salisbury was the chief spokesman. Such was the situation which projected into the election campaign of the London County Council of 1895 a spirit of intense animosity.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain's municipal experiences and his interest in social reform served to involve him in the agitation which the whole problem aroused. In order to view in a proper light his position on the subject during the 'nineties, it is essential to recall his ideas in 1884 when Harcourt introduced his London Government Bill. That measure was somewhat similar in character to the Report of the Royal Commission of 1894, in that the principle of the Bill was the unity of the Metropolis. Though Chamberlain at that time had given his assent to the creation of a unified London, his personal opinion had favoured a scheme which would preserve the ancient prestige of the City and which would provide for the creation of borough councils as well as a central City council.<sup>2</sup> What would be his stand when he was no longer acting in cooperation with his colleagues of 1884? Would he still continue to uphold the view he had reluctantly accepted, or would he revert to his original position? The latter course—the one naturally to be expected—was the one that he adopted. The Local Government Act of 1888, to be sure, did not give full expression to his ideas, yet it had allowed the City to retain its unique position, and a central council had been established. In 1894, in debate on the local government measure of that year, he found opportunity to express his opinions on the

<sup>1</sup> Jephson, Henry, *The Making of Modern London* (London, 1910), pp. 201-202.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 91.

subject in connexion with the question of extending a wider electorate to the vestries of London. Though he firmly believed in reform along those lines, he dwelt on the futility of such a meagre provision while there was still need of a real reform which would go to the root of the whole matter. It was his desire that a system might be devised for the Metropolis which would secure for the local administration of London that personal and voluntary unpaid supervision which had been the secret of the success of provincial municipalities. Such a purpose he did not believe could be fulfilled by a vast centralized administration. He did not launch forth in a tirade against the existing county council; but he regretted that it had been established prior to the creation of subordinate authorities upon which he felt was dependent the existence of a spirit of local patriotism and personal responsibility for the welfare and happiness of the population.<sup>1</sup>

When the agitation became acute in the election campaign of 1895, owing to definite proposals advanced by Liberals and Conservatives respectively, Chamberlain was among those who took prominent parts in the controversy. Since he had won the approval of the nation as a great municipal reformer, especial interest was shown in his position on the question. The *Spectator*, in reviewing a speech that he had delivered in Stepney, London, in February, 1895, regretfully commented on the stand that he had taken among the forces of reaction. From the Liberal or Progressive viewpoint, the *Spectator's* comment is doubtless true, but on the other hand there is no evidence of mere political subserviency on Chamberlain's part—his

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 21 (1894), pp. 818-823. Many of Chamberlain's colleagues were very antagonistic toward the London County Council since it was in the control of the Progressives who were sympathetic in their attitude toward "so-called socialistic ideas." Lord Salisbury vehemently attacked the body in 1894. Jephson, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-206; *Times*, Nov. 8, 1894.



opinions so ably defended in that speech merely echo convictions of many years past. It is difficult to question the sincerity of his words when he said that he was led to the school of municipal thought to which he belonged not by passion, not by party feeling, but by experience. He again emphasized municipal government as the potent agent of social reform, "an instrument by which the wealth and ability of the whole community could be concentrated and brought to bear in order to relieve the wants of its least fortunate members, and in order to raise the general level and standard of the whole population". The accomplishment of this purpose he did not believe could be obtained by the creation of "one vast overreaching centralized despotism" to which all London would be subject; it could only be obtained by placing "all power, all dignity, all authority in purely local municipalities such as would adequately express the wishes and the feelings of the districts which they represented". In this vigorous speech, he was by no means lenient in his denunciation of the Progressive rule of the County Council; he was correspondingly zealous in his appeal for Moderate control.<sup>1</sup>

Considerable success attended the efforts of the Conservative forces in the election, though their power was limited by the selection of aldermen of the opposing faction. Accordingly, three years later when the problem of London Government was still unsolved, another contentious election campaign took place. Chamberlain again entered the arena and delivered an address before an immense gathering in Surrey Theatre. But the Conservatives were not successful in maintaining even their former power; the Metropolis had given its sanction to a government by which, according to the *Times*, the people of London "were to be made the

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 7, 1895; *Spectator*, vol. 74 (1895), pp. 190, 191. See also *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 63 (1895), pp. 904-912

victims of a series of fantastic experiments in communism and socialism".<sup>1</sup>

The culmination of the agitation was reached in the introduction of the London Government Bill in February, 1899. The significant fact about this Bill was that it did not touch the City or the County Council; the main principle of the measure was the transference of the duties of the old vestries to twenty-eight metropolitan boroughs, each of which was endowed with its separate mayor, aldermen, and town councillors. These proposals, it is readily seen, harmonized with the ideas set forth by Chamberlain—the existence of separate municipalities, in which as he believed, it would be possible to develop the spirit of local interest and patriotism. As a Cabinet member, he naturally assumed his share in the responsibility for the measure, but, doubtless due to the very arduous demands upon him by the South African difficulties, he did not take an active part in its passage. Only on one occasion did he participate in the debate on the Bill. During a discussion with regard to the question of triennial versus annual election for members of the Council, Chamberlain upheld the advisability of the more frequent exercise of the franchise.<sup>2</sup> An ultimate solution was reached in placing the decision in the hands of the Local Government Board, its action to be determined by a majority vote of the borough councils. The Bill became law, and after the dissolution of the vestries and district boards, the new government was put into operation in November, 1900. Even the Progressive party recognized that the Act was beneficial in many ways, though it held that the real problem—the unification of London—was still unsolved.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Mar. 2 and 5, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 70 (1899), pp. 788, 789; 62 and 63 Vict., c. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Jephson, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

The close of the nineteenth century witnessed the enactment of the last important political reform associated with Chamberlain's parliamentary life. In 1876 he had entered the House of Commons as a municipal reformer of the highest rank; from that time until the close of his imperial activities, his name was connected with nearly every movement of significance which would increase the welfare of the local community. In the field of parliamentary reform, he laboured zealously for the extension of the political rights of the rural labourers as provided during the agitation of the 'eighties, though it must be admitted that his position as to future reform became more conservative during the second half of his career. More essential to his mind was the use of existing legislation for the promotion of social measures. It was not his privilege to carry through any law for either parliamentary or local reform, but as an individual member he played a prominent and influential part—in Parliament as well as on the public platform—in showing the significance of such reforms as a means of advancing the social welfare of the people.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHAMBERLAIN AND EDUCATION

THE education of Joseph Chamberlain was a striking contrast to that of most of the statesmen with whom he was to be associated in the government of the United Kingdom. While he was still a lad of sixteen, his school days were ended and he entered upon an active business career. The fascinating life of the Public School and the University, which have determined the character of many a prominent statesman, were not to form a part of his experience. His youth and early manhood were to bring him into contact with those classes to whom, in many cases, even elementary education was not yet a possibility, and as a consequence he developed in this early period a sincere regard for their welfare. Doubtless the influence of his father who was "keenly interested in political, charitable, and educational movements" was considerable, for during the two years when he was learning the shoemaker's trade he taught in the Sunday school connected with Carter Lane Chapel. As was fitting in that generation of educational deficiencies, religious teaching was accompanied by some secular instruction.<sup>1</sup>

After Chamberlain's business activities were transferred from the Metropolis to Birmingham, he participated in the educational work of the Unitarians at the New Meeting House. In 1856 and 1857 when an evening course was given in science, history and general literature, the name of

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, Alexander, *Joseph Chamberlain, An Honest Biography* (London, 1914), pp. 1-6.

the young screw manufacturer was included in the list of lecturers. He was a teacher in the Sunday school of the Church of the Messiah about 1865, and he also taught history in the night schools. A few years later when the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society was formed, he became the first president. Appreciation of these efforts of early manhood was borne in upon the brilliant statesman in after years when he came in contact with his former pupils. Association with the workmen in the firm of which the young Chamberlain became a member also aroused a personal concern in their welfare, and doubtless contributed materially to the development of his future parliamentary policy in behalf of the masses of England. In connexion with a social club established for the benefit of the workmen, a night school was maintained as well as a debating club, at which their benefactor was a frequent attendant.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that this progressive manufacturer who had shown such concern for the advancement of the working class, should have been one of the founders of the Birmingham Education Society, an organization established in February, 1867. The object of the Society was the advancement of education in Birmingham and the immediate neighborhood by the collection of funds to provide increased school accommodation and by the payment of school fees for the education of children of indigent parents. Chamberlain was present at the preliminary meeting of the Society and became a member of the Committee organized to carry out the work. A house-to-house canvass of the homes

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8; Marris, *Life of Chamberlain*, pp. 44, 45; *Post*, Feb. 3, 1874; New, Herbert Jun., *Centenary of the Church of the Messiah (Formerly New Meeting) Sunday Schools—Sketch of the History of the Schools* (Birmingham, 1888), pp. 18-27. When the author attended the Church of the Messiah in July, 1924, she met Mr. Joseph Kimberley, the one surviving member of Chamberlain's Sunday school class, then in attendance at the church. He spoke with pride and appreciation of his former teacher.

of the "manual labour class" in order to ascertain the educational status of the community was undertaken by trustworthy agents as a part of the first year's activities. As a result of the investigation the Society in one year issued six thousand orders for the payment of school fees, though by the end of the year only one-third of the children for whom fees had been paid remained in school. This emphasized the desirability of compulsion, a principle advocated by Chamberlain, Dixon, Dale and others. Not all members of the Society, however, concurred in this opinion, though all were agreed that local authorities should be empowered to levy rates for educational purposes. On the question of creating a new class of schools to compete with the denominational schools—another project of which Chamberlain approved, due to his Nonconformist views—there was also a divergence of ideas. Nevertheless, a beginning in the fulfilment of such a scheme was eventually made in the erection of an undenominational school in All Saints' Ward for the boys and girls belonging to the working classes. At a meeting called at the office of the Society to consider the above proposal, Chamberlain presided and in a convincing speech urged the advisability of its adoption. He especially emphasized the advantages possessed by Americans and Germans over the English in manufactures in consequence of their superior education. In order to raise the sum of £1000 necessary for the erection of the school, he offered to give £20, or £50 if nine others would do the same. When the memorial stone of the school was laid the following year, he as one of the donors responded to a toast on national and unsectarian education.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Birmingham Education Society, *First Annual Report*, 1868 (London, 1868); *Post*, June 4 and 8, 1868, Sept. 4, 1869; Dale, A. W. W., *Life of R. W. Dale* (London, 1898), pp. 270, 271. In 1885 Chamberlain referred to All Saints' Ward as the place where he had his first introduction to educational matters. *Times*, Nov. 4, 1885.

Prior to the establishment of a national system of education in 1870, the Birmingham Education Society met with reasonable success in carrying out its programme of activities.<sup>1</sup> It acquired special significance, however, as the foster parent of the National Education League which was organized in the Midland city in October, 1869, and which put forth as its object the establishment of a system to secure the education of every child in England and Wales. It aimed to secure this national system of education through the local authorities, with the further revolutionary demands that it should be unsectarian, compulsory and free. Chamberlain became the head of the Executive Committee, and as acting chairman of the League, he was chiefly responsible for originating and conducting its policy in the country. The League which was composed almost without exception of members of the Liberal party spread with great rapidity throughout England. The organization determined early in its history to make parliamentary work a prominent feature in its programme; accordingly, a bill providing for a national system of education and based on League principles was prepared by the Executive Committee of the League for introduction into the House of Commons in the session of 1870.<sup>2</sup>

The rapid development of the League showed unmistak-

<sup>1</sup> See Reports of the Birmingham Education Society in the *Post*, 1868-1871 *passim*. The Education Society turned over its work to the Birmingham School Board after the latter was created in 1870. *Post*, Feb. 2, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. i (Feb. 1, 1870), p. 17; Adams, *History of the Elementary School Contest in England*, pp. 197 *et seq.* Two "Unions" were started in opposition to the National Education League, one in Birmingham, the other in Manchester. The object of these two associations was "to counteract the efforts of the Birmingham League and others advocating secular training only, and the secularization of our national institutions." *Ibid.*, p. 207; Birmingham Education Union, *Report of the Meetings of the Conference Held in Birmingham, December 9, 1869* (London, 1869).

ably that the whole country was alive to the seriousness of the educational situation. As a result, the Liberal Government under Gladstone's leadership, which had been brought into power by the general election after the passage of the Reform Act of 1867, turned their attention to this important phase of social reform. The stupendous task of introducing and carrying through a bill to provide for public elementary education in England and Wales was entrusted to William Forster, the Vice-President of the Council. The Elementary Education Bill of 1870 as finally presented, proposed to make use of the denominational schools already existing, while it also provided for the introduction of new and additional machinery. State aid was to be continued to these voluntary agencies, thus encouraging them to maintain and increase their activities. If within a period of one year, the existing schools were not able to supply the deficiencies, school districts were to be established with school boards to provide the necessary places. Provision for free education was not included in the proposed measure, though by article seventeen, school boards were given the power of remitting the fees of necessitous children. As to compulsory attendance, a beginning was made, in that boards, with the approval of the Education Department, were empowered to make by-laws requiring parents to send their children to school within the age limits of five and twelve years.<sup>1</sup>

When the Government Bill was introduced the League resolved to withhold the measure which it had prepared and to endeavour to obtain amendments to the Bill before the House. It was by no means satisfied with the solution of the educational problem as presented by Forster, and it therefore set out on a vigorous campaign for its modification. A

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1870, vol. i, pp. 505-541; Reid, T. Wemyss, *Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster*, 2 vols. (London, 1888), vol. i, pp. 450 *et seq.*



deputation to the Prime Minister for the purpose of presenting resolutions embodying the objections of the League was the primary action decided upon. On March 9, 1870, Gladstone received the delegation which consisted of about four hundred gentlemen from approximately seventy localities and including thirty members of Parliament and twelve mayors. After presentation by George Dixon, Chamberlain, as the chairman of the Executive Committee, tersely stated the opposition of the League to the Government measure. The objections set forth in the resolutions presented and in the chairman's speech were as follows: in the first place, they objected to the year's delay made possible by the privilege accorded to denominational schools to supply the existing deficiencies in education; secondly, they believed that popularly elected school boards should be immediately established in all districts and that to them should be entrusted the responsibilities of providing for the educational necessities of those localities. But the burden of their opposition was directed against what Chamberlain termed the "permissive recognition of great principles." While the League demanded a complete establishment of free and compulsory education, the Bill merely provided that the local authorities *might* put into operation the principle of compulsion, they *might* pay the school fees of the children of indigent parents, and they *might* in special cases establish free schools. The so-called conscience clause which gave the parent the privilege of withdrawing his child from all religious instruction given in any public elementary school, the League considered entirely unsatisfactory, since they believed that no parents would dare to make use of it. They asked that no creed, catechism or tenet peculiar to any sect should be taught in any board school or other school receiving grants from local rates. The reading of the Bible, however, without note or comment might be permitted. In all other schools receiving

State aid, they requested that the religious teaching should be given at a definite time, either before or after ordinary school business so that any children might be conveniently excused from such attendance if the parent so desired.<sup>1</sup>

Public meetings were held throughout the country to voice disapproval of the Bill. In the Town Hall at Birmingham, Chamberlain moved a resolution of protest that stated the League's objections to the proposed law.<sup>2</sup> The feelings of surprise and dismay aroused by the measure among Nonconformists gave rise to the formation of the Central Nonconformist Committee in Birmingham, an organization that soon maintained connexion with Dissenting Committees throughout the Kingdom. Under its supervision, meetings were held in every part of the country and petitions were presented to the House of Commons requesting a reconsideration of the religious question. Chamberlain was closely identified with the activities of the organization during its entire existence.<sup>3</sup>

In Parliament also it was upon the religious question that the opponents of the Bill determined to take their stand. At the request of the Executive Committee of the League, Mr. Dixon, Member for Birmingham, moved an amendment to the second reading to the effect that no measure could provide a permanent or satisfactory settlement which left the question of religious instruction in schools supported by public funds and rates to be determined by local authorities. He added, however, that the amendment by no means covered the ground of his objections to the Bill. In a few words he reviewed the other points at issue which had

<sup>1</sup> *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. i (Mar. 1, 1870), p. 2; *National Education League, Verbatim Report of Proceedings of Deputation to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M. P.* (Birmingham, 1870).

<sup>2</sup> *Boyd, Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, pp. 8-11.

<sup>3</sup> *Adams, op. cit.*, pp. 220-222; *Boyd, op. cit.*, p. 14; *Post*, Oct. 20, 1870.

been raised by the League. The amendment was later withdrawn when he was assured of the favourable disposition of the Government to consider the views of those with whom he was cooperating.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the strenuous opposition by all dissenting forces, the Prime Minister eventually granted somewhat limited concessions. A "time-table conscience clause" giving effect to the request that religious teaching should be given at the beginning or end of the school session was added, and likewise a provision that the teaching of catechism and formularies in rate-aided schools should be prohibited. The more stringent requirement of Bible reading without note or comment was not adopted. The original year of grace granted to denominational schools to supply educational deficiencies was reduced to a period of about five months; furthermore, all possibilities for such schools to be directly subsidized out of the rates were entirely removed. Aside from these concessions against denominationalism, the free election of school boards by rate payers was established, and power was extended to all localities to acquire these local boards on application to the Department.<sup>2</sup>

Much had been gained, yet Chamberlain and his forces were by no means satisfied. The increased grants to denominational schools precluded the possibility of their "painless extinction," as hoped for by Dr. Dale; nation-wide compulsory and free education had not been achieved; even the religious difficulty was still present, due to the apparently unobtrusive insertion of the twenty-fifth clause by which rates might be levied on the whole community to pay the fees of necessitous children in denominational schools.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 199 (1870), pp. 1919-1931, vol. 200, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> 33 and 34 Vict., c. 75; Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> Adams says that clause twenty-five was agreed to without discussion or division. It was overlooked, he asserts, since it was first grouped

In view of this situation, it was decided at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the League in September that the organization should be maintained and extended for the accomplishment of the unfulfilled parts of their programme.<sup>1</sup> The Central Nonconformist Committee also resolved to continue its agitation for a more satisfactory settlement. At a meeting held at Carr's Lane Chapel in October, the speech by Chamberlain as presiding officer showed that a spirit of conciliation and moderation was by no means being fostered. "The Committee were of the opinion," he said, "that they had been too moderate. They had formerly asked for no increase of aid to denominational schools; now they asked that all grants of national money for denominational purposes should be gradually withdrawn."<sup>2</sup> However intense the feeling may have been, public agitation was in a measure silenced by the contemporaneous European war.

In the meantime, Chamberlain was most anxious that Birmingham should immediately avail herself of the privileges granted in the Education Act of 1870 and establish a school board. To safeguard the wishes of the minority, the Act had established the cumulative vote, according to which every elector was entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of members to be elected. He could give all his votes to one candidate or distribute them among the candidates as he saw fit. As a result of this provision a bitter strife ensued between Dissenters and Denominationalists for the control of the new Board. The Liberals unwisely presented fifteen candidates for election—the entire membership of the Board;

with clause twenty-three of the original Bill, which provided for assistance out of the rates to existing schools. The greater clause overshadowed the lesser, and it was not discovered until later that a similar principle was involved. *Op. cit.*, pp. 227, 228; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 202 (1870), p. 1324.

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Sept. 8, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1870.

accordingly Chamberlain and his six followers found themselves in a minority, with the control in the hands of the eight Churchmen elected.<sup>1</sup>

The following three years witnessed a continuous strife of Churchmen versus Dissenters for the establishment of their respective policies. Among the Nonconformists, the lead was taken by Chamberlain in his determination to weaken the control of the Church party as much as possible. The contest centered upon the application of those provisions of the Education Act empowering school boards to make by-laws for the enforcement of the powers of compulsion and for the payment of fees to existing schools from the local rates, made possible by the twenty-fifth clause. Chamberlain claimed that the payment of fees to denominational schools would be an infringement upon the rights of conscience; as an alternative he proposed the establishment of free schools to provide for the children of those parents who were unable to pay the required fees. In Birmingham as in other parts of England, the contest centered upon the twenty-fifth clause to determine whether the country was prepared to accept in perpetuity the system of sectarian schools supported by public rates. Those who upheld the clause were in favour of religious education and those who were against it were in favour of secular education. If the principle of compulsion were to be adopted prior to the establishment of board schools, it was inevitable that the fees of children of indigent parents would be paid to the voluntary schools then in existence. The settlement of the question was postponed for a period. In the meantime ardent mass meetings in which Chamberlain participated were held to protest against the will of the Church party. In July, 1871, the proposed by-laws were finally adopted, but the victory was by no means complete as

<sup>1</sup> 33 and 34 Vict., c. 75; *Post*, Nov. 24, Dec. 2, 1870. The Liberals polled 220,637 votes, the Church party 153,703 votes.

the Town Council refused to honour the Board's precept to pay the account rendered for the fees due to denominational schools. Eventually a settlement was arranged when the Council agreed to pay the required amount on the condition that two members of the majority party would not vote for the payment of fees to denominational schools for the current year. The resistance offered by the minority, therefore, proved so successful that the contested by-law was never enforced. On the question of providing religious teaching in the Board schools, the sectarians were able to carry their point; by-laws were passed that the Bible should be read and taught daily and that provision should be made for the use of prayers and hymns in the schools. Wrangling over the religious difficulty naturally retarded the first and most pressing duty of the Board—that of estimating the school requirements of the Borough and of making arrangements to meet the deficiencies. According to a calculation made by the first School Board and published immediately before the expiration of its term of office, no fewer than 20,000 children of school age in Birmingham were not receiving education of any kind.<sup>1</sup>

A beginning in laying a firm foundation for a splendid public school system had been made by 1873 when Chamberlain became chairman of the Board, as a result of the Liberal victory in the second Board election. Then an opportunity was provided for carrying out in large measure the policy of education advocated by the National Education League. Steps were soon taken to reverse the programme of the denominationalists. In December, 1873, grants were withdrawn from an industrial school under denominational control and the General Purposes Committee was instructed to

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Feb. 2, 16, Mar. 16, 30, May 25, June 6, 23, 1871, Feb. 15, July 18, 1872, Feb. 27, Mar. 13, Sept. 25, Oct. 7, 1873; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-256; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 23 (1875), pp. 422-426.

take immediate steps to secure suitable accommodation for industrial pupils. The by-law requiring the payment of fees to denominational schools was abolished, though it was voted to remit the fees of children of indigent parents in Board schools.<sup>1</sup>

The arrangements for religious instruction which had been the main issue in the recent election underwent a radical change. In January, 1872, the Executive Committee of the League had receded from its earlier position in favour of Bible reading without note or comment, since in the opinion of all secularists, it was unmistakably sectarian. As a substitute for this sectarian instruction, they advised the establishment of a purely secular system according to which no religious instruction would be given by the Board teachers, but the entire responsibility for such teaching would be placed upon the various denominations at their own cost. Naturally Birmingham was the logical place in which to test the value of this scheme. The School Board passed a resolution in December, 1873, that it cease to provide religious teaching in all schools where it was being given at the cost of the ratepayers, and by later action it required that such instruction should be provided by voluntary agencies. Three months prior to the passage of the first resolution the Birmingham Religious Education Society representing eight denominations, had been organized for the purpose of supplying the desired instruction to children of the various dissenting sects. Until June, 1875, the denominationalists refused absolutely to cooperate. In that year a few of the clergy signified their willingness to participate in carrying out the new system, though no organized effort was made until January, 1878, when an arrangement was arrived at in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 422-434; *Post*, Nov. 19, Dec. 4, 1873. The remission of fees to board schools was provided for in clause seventeen. 33 and 34 Vict., c. 75.

connexion with the Church of England to give voluntary religious instruction in some of the Board schools. Regardless of the opposition of the Established Church, the party in power considered the experiment of the first two or three years as a fair solution of the religious difficulty; in fact, Chamberlain asserted in his first speech before Parliament in 1876 that there was more religious instruction given to the children of Birmingham, and that it was more complete, efficient, satisfactory and universal than at any previous period. Even so, it must be admitted that many children were not receiving religious education of any kind. This was due not only to the attitude of Churchmen, but also to the difficulties which were experienced by the dissenters in securing volunteers and funds to carry on the work. Eventually, after Chamberlain had severed his connexion with the Board, the religious communities were forced to admit their inability or disinclination to teach religion without state assistance and in 1879 it was agreed that the Bible should be read without note or comment by the ordinary teachers.<sup>1</sup>

The partial application of a second principle of the League—that of free education—met in the final analysis with greater success. Though Chamberlain laboured for the establishment of schools which would be entirely free, he was unsuccessful;<sup>2</sup> but a great deal was accomplished by the

<sup>1</sup> Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-279, 298; *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. 3 (1874), pp. 912, 939; *Post*, Sept. 3, Nov. 12 and 18, 1873, Jan. 1, Feb. 12, 1874, June 5, 1875, Jan. 26, 1876, Jan. 24, Mar. 13, 1878; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 23 (1875), pp. 428-430.

<sup>2</sup> A resolution by Dr. Dale asking for the permission of the Department to establish a free school in Birmingham was rejected by the School Board due to an unfortunate series of circumstances. *Ibid.*, p. 433, *Post*, Oct. 10, 1874. The Conservative Government, 1874-1880, did not favour gratuitous education, and school boards were not allowed to fix the fees desirable in the interests of schools and pupils for fear they might unduly compete with sectarian schools. When the Birmingham Board was ordered to double their fees, they were able to resist, and ultimately succeeded in establishing penny schools. Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 312, 313.



lowering of fees in many schools of the city. The penny schools especially proved a decided success: institutions in poor neighborhoods which had previously remained half empty were soon overcrowded with pupils. The crux of the whole question seemed to rest upon the supposition held by the Church party that free education would injure the denominational schools. The attitude of Parliament was by no means favourable to this radical demand and it had refused to sanction the establishment of free schools except in cases of absolute necessity. The contest was brought to a head in Birmingham in June, 1875, when the chairman moved a resolution that in the opinion of the Board, admission to all schools provided and maintained by public funds should be free and that in the name of the Board a petition should be presented to Parliament to pass a bill allowing school boards to establish free schools. On that occasion he assured the leader of the clericals that the Church party was quite mistaken in supposing that his resolution was due to an insane desire to destroy the Church of England. In his opinion, the Church of England was destroying itself as rapidly as it possibly could, and consequently he had not the least idea of using the educational question as one of the weapons for its destruction. He proceeded to prove to his opponents that the establishment of penny schools had not proved detrimental to the denominational system and that the interest of the whole community would be most effectively and economically carried out under a free system. The outcome of the debate was an affirmative vote in favour of Chamberlain's resolution; the Birmingham School Board was thus placed on record as having given its sanction to the principle of free education.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, July 3, Oct. 9, 1875; *Free Schools—Report of a Debate of the Birmingham School Board, June 18, 1875* (London, 1875); *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 23 (1875), pp. 432-434.

Though Chamberlain had been insistent in 1875 that free education would not destroy the voluntary schools, he was by no means hesitant the following year in advocating a withdrawal of financial support which would certainly have been most detrimental to their continuance. In March, 1876, he moved a resolution before the School Board that a petition be presented to Parliament praying that no additional grant should be made in support of denominational schools. In the course of the speech which he delivered on that occasion, he made a severe indictment of inefficiency against these schools. "Ours", he said, "is a growing system—rapidly growing to strength and vigour; theirs is a system slowly decaying". Furthermore, he held that great as had been the achievements of the Board schools during their short period of existence, the results would have been much better if the denominational interests had not been in the way.<sup>1</sup>

The close of Chamberlain's six years of service, first as a member and then as the real director of the Birmingham School Board, showed that remarkable progress had been made in laying the foundation of an efficient public school system. Whereas the school accommodation in the Borough was limited to 34,432 places in 1871, five years later it had been increased to 49,095, and of this number 15,370 were being accommodated in the new Board schools. Thirteen schools had been erected and the fourteen others which were in course of preparation would make provision for the eleven thousand children still in need of accommodation. The eminent Mayor of Birmingham who so ably directed these activities had exhibited remarkable foresight in meeting the educational needs of the community. His views included many features of school life now considered so essential to the development of a high-minded, public-spirited and healthy

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, J., *Increase of Grants to Denominational Schools* (Birmingham, 1876), pp. 3-14.

individual. He believed that the buildings erected should be attractive, for as the outward and visible signs of the work going on within, they should not be in evident discord with the nobility of the duty which they sought to perform. That an obligation rested upon the Board to care for the physical health of the children as well as the mental was also a part of his creed. To fulfill this purpose, playgrounds were established in connexion with every school. False economy played no part in his scheme of operations, since it was toward the future that he looked. His own words best substantiate the truth of this statement:

What we have done in the course of a few generations of child-life must inevitably transfigure the town. The money we have spent is the best investment which the community can possibly make, and will certainly bring large returns in the increased happiness and intelligence, and even in the increased productive capacity of our citizens; and when I recollect that it has been shown that the cost of pauperism and crime in Birmingham at the present time exceeds £120,000 per annum, I think I am not too sanguine in hoping that we may save all that may be necessary out of this heavy charge, which I believe is an indirect result at least of the ignorance which our efforts will do much to remove.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain did not confine his interest during these years to the cause of elementary education. Soon after his election as chairman of the School Board he presided at a meeting held by the Association for Promoting Higher Education in Birmingham. Even at this time he looked forward to the day when a local university might be established or at all events a union of colleges and institutes with a common

<sup>1</sup> Birmingham School Board, *Report of Work Accomplished by the Birmingham School Board During the Six Years Ending November 28, 1876* (Birmingham, 1876); Chamberlain, J., *Six Years of Educational Work in Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1876).

course of instruction. To the advancement of the medical education of women he also gave his earnest support. In September, 1875, he introduced a deputation to the Council of Queen's College, requesting that the institution might take steps for the admission of women to the medical courses. The Council, however, was not induced to take favourable action on the request of the delegation. At the termination of Chamberlain's connexion with the School Board, he presented a gift of £500 for the foundation of a scholarship in the King Edward the Sixth School in Birmingham, that at least one worthy student of the Board schools might be assisted in his efforts for a higher education.<sup>1</sup>

In the Nonconformist borough of Birmingham, the League programme had been given as complete expression as was possible under the Education Act of 1870. The permissive features of that measure, such as the formation of a school board, the establishment of penny schools as an approach to free education, the making of by-laws providing for compulsory education and the remission of fees in board schools, the separation of religious from secular education—all these had been taken advantage of in that city which was indeed the stronghold of all radical demands in education. Quite different was the situation in many parts of England, especially where the Established Church held sway. In many of the large towns, satisfactory progress was being made in the development of an efficient school system under public control, but in most rural sections, due to strenuous opposition the denominational school was not being supplemented by the unsectarian institution, although thousands of children were still unprovided with elementary education. In the five months of grace allowed to voluntary schools to supply the existing deficiencies in education, enormous strides in the development of such schools had been made as a result

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Dec. 18, 1873, Sept. 18, Oct. 4, 1875; Marris, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

of the building grants and the fifty per cent increase of grants from State funds available to all public elementary schools. In fact the Nonconformist body was disposed to look upon the Education Act of 1870 as providing not the mere continuance of the denominational system, but as establishing a new species of religious endowment, which to them would be most disastrous from an educational standpoint. In view of this situation the National Education League pursued a programme of varied activities until after the passage of the Education Act of 1876.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did the League use its efforts to assist in putting the Education Act of 1870 into operation, so as to secure, as far as possible, the establishment of unsectarian, compulsory and free schools, but it also sought to promote amendments to the Act by converting the permissive into obligatory clauses, and by securing the recognition of the principle of religious equality in rate-aided schools. Further action was taken in the desire to establish a distinctly national system of education—a policy which had as its *desideratum* the ultimate elimination of the denominational schools. Prior to Chamberlain's entrance into Parliament in 1876, he naturally took no active part in presenting the views of the League before the Commons; that part was taken by his predecessor in the House, George Dixon, who, as chairman of the League Council, was parliamentary leader and adviser of the organization down to the time of his retirement. However, it must be borne in mind that he presented all educational bills and resolutions in behalf of the League of which Chamberlain was the acting chairman, and as such the latter was chiefly responsible for originating and conducting its policy.<sup>2</sup>

Not many months after the passage of the Education Act, the first step taken by Dixon to express the disapproval of the

<sup>1</sup> Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 235 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 205, 237 *et seq.*

League was the moving of a resolution against the increase of grants to denominational schools—an expression of the extreme displeasure felt by opponents of the denominational schools in their very marked development since the passage of the Education Act. In support of the parliamentary action, a joint deputation from the League and the Central Nonconformist Committee waited on the Vice-President to protest against the increased grant, and to make various recommendations which they believed would further the efficiency of the public school system. The strength of the denominational forces prevented the adoption of the resolution or the acceptance of other League proposals.<sup>1</sup> Later in the session a second grievance was embodied in a bill for the abolition of cumulative voting, the device which had proved so disastrous to the League candidates in the first School Board election in Birmingham. Though the measure called forth a spirited debate, it did not pass the second reading.<sup>2</sup> When the League held its third annual meeting in October, 1871, and the future programme was under consideration, Chamberlain moved a resolution requesting that their parliamentary leader should, in the next session, present the following resolution:

That, in the opinion of this House, the provisions of the Elementary Act are defective, and its working unsatisfactory, inasmuch as it fails to secure the general election of School Boards in towns and rural districts; it does not render obligatory the attendance of children at school; it deals in a partial and irregular manner with the remission and payment of school

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 204 (1881), pp. 1808-1812; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 264, 265. At a meeting of the Executive Committee at Birmingham, Feb. 2, it was resolved that the parliamentary efforts of the League during that session should be concentrated upon the proposed increase of grants to denominational schools. *Post*, Feb. 15, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 207 (1871), pp. 1525-1530.

fees by School Boards; it allows School Boards to pay fees out of rates levied upon the community to denominational schools, over which ratepayers have no control; it permits School Boards to use the public money of ratepayers for the purpose of imparting dogmatic religious instruction in schools established by School Boards, and by the concession of those permissive powers, it provokes religious discord throughout the country, and by the exercise of them, it violates the rights of conscience.

In the fulfillment of this request the resolution was moved in Parliament by Dixon in March, 1872, and the grievances of the League set forth at length. The rejection of the resolution by a majority of over two hundred and fifty<sup>1</sup> did not deter the League representatives from attempting to introduce six weeks later a bill which provided for the repeal of the twenty-fifth clause of the Education Act. Again the Commons refused to give their sanction to this particular feature of the League programme; the bill was not so much as allowed a first reading before the House. The agitation against this famous clause—a discussion which had its origin with the Birmingham School Board—became so extensive that the Government was unable to ignore it completely. Chamberlain especially was not inclined to minimize the principle involved. At a conference of Nonconformist delegates in Manchester, January, 1872, he had said with emphasis:

This payment . . . of fees to denominational schools, this grievance which has aroused the country, is in itself a small matter, but the principle, of which it is a violation, is a great matter. . . . And so we say this payment of fees is the last straw which has aroused us to throw off the whole burden; but

<sup>1</sup> National Education League, *Report of the Third Annual Meeting*, Oct. 17 and 18, 1871 (Birmingham, 1871), p. 37; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 209 (1872), pp. 1395-1407, 1481.

once aroused to this position we shall not rest until every vestige of ecclesiastical supremacy has been swept away, and complete religious equality has been secured for every section of the community.<sup>1</sup>

So hostile had become the feeling among the dissenting elements that disruption of the Liberal party seemed imminent. Chamberlain fearlessly announced in March, 1872, that their faith was in the Liberal creed, and not in the Liberal party nor any Liberal Minister. An attempt at reconciliation was therefore made by the Liberal Government when Forster proposed in the Elementary Education Act (1870) Amendment Bill of 1873 to transfer the power to remit the fees of indigent parents from the school boards to the guardians who would exercise with greater discretion the powers entrusted to them. But "such shifting of cards" by no means satisfied the opponents of the existing system; as a result the provision was withdrawn at the second reading of the Bill.<sup>2</sup>

Nor did other clauses of the measure which provided for the election of all school boards throughout the Kingdom by ballot, and for certain administrative improvements, meet the other demands made by the League. More effective provision for compulsory education or the universal formation of school boards had been completely ignored. An amend-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 210 (1872), pp. 1714-1718; *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. iii (1875-1877), p. 1411; Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Mar. 19, 1872; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 216 (1873), pp. 903-905, vol. 217, p. 512. The reasons given by Chamberlain for objecting to payments according to the twenty-fifth clause were as follows: (1) because they violated the principles of religious equality; (2) because they obstructed the development of a really national system by facilitating the competition and perpetuating the existence of semi-sectarian institutions; (3) because they constituted violation of the sound principle of legislation which required that taxation and representation should go hand in hand. Chamberlain, J., *The Government and the Twenty-fifth Clause of the Education Act*. Leaflet, No. 310 (Birmingham, 1873).



ment to the Bill which stated that the inclusion of the above was essential to a satisfactory revision of the measure of 1870, was presented by the League representative, only to be negatived by more than a two-thirds vote.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the minority was not persuaded from its determination to gain at least a partial fulfillment of its policy. In the parliamentary sessions of 1874, 1875 and 1876, bills were introduced for the compulsory attendance of children at elementary schools, and the universal establishment of school boards as the machinery by which attendance should be enforced. After the rejection of a bill for the repeal of the twenty-fifth clause in 1874, their entire efforts were centered upon the more important measures, though agitation against the clause was not at an end.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the defeat of all these measures, definite progress was being made. The year after Forster's unsuccessful efforts to conciliate the League forces, when a Conservative Government was again in power, direct compulsory education became identified with the programme of the Liberal party, though extensive opposition prevailed against the proposal to enforce compulsion in every district through the medium of the school board. Among Conservatives as well as Liberals, the earlier hostility was breaking down, as definitely shown in the Education Bill introduced by Lord Sandon in the third session of the new Government. The proposed legislation which became the Elementary Education Act of 1876 stated more clearly the duty of the parent in regard to the education of his child,

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 216 (1873), pp. 901-904; vol. 217, pp. 571-575, 753-761.

<sup>2</sup> Elementary Education Act (1870) Amendment Bill—*Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 219 (1874), pp. 1304-1358; Elementary Education (Compulsory Attendance) Bill—*Ibid.*, vol. 220, pp. 793-853; Elementary Education (Compulsory Attendance) Bill—*Ibid.*, vol. 224 (1875), pp. 1562 *et seq.*, 1611; Elementary Education Act (1870) Amendment Bill—*Ibid.*, vol. 228 (1876), pp. 1251-1267, 1300.

placing new restrictions on employment which might interfere with his instruction. Where school boards were not in existence, school attendance committees were to be created which might discharge those duties relating to the attendance of children at school. The Bill also provided for the transfer of payment of fees to denominational schools from the school boards to the guardians, just as originally planned by Forster in 1873. It must be recognized that the measure made marked concessions, but the League members were far from content. Prior to Dixon's withdrawal from Parliament, he announced his opposition to the Bill; during the course of its enactment, amendments were moved by members of the Liberal party in favour of direct compulsion and of the extension of public management of all public elementary schools. When Chamberlain succeeded Dixon as the Member for Birmingham in July of that year, he likewise, in his maiden speech before the House, refused to give his approval to the Conservative proposal, and in a moderate and able speech presented the programme of the League as it had been carried out in his own Borough, as the real solution of the educational difficulty. One could not expect that he could consistently give his sanction to a measure which, as he had said before his constituents, had "nothing in it from end to end but one long concession to denominational interests".<sup>1</sup>

The Conservative party had attempted by the Education Bill of 1876 to close the educational controversy and, regardless of the opposition which the measure aroused, subsequent events proved that it had by no means failed in its purpose. In March, 1877, the official magazine of the League announced that however faulty in its construction and objec-

<sup>1</sup> *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. 3 (1875-1877), pp. 988, 1319; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 229 (1876), pp. 929-952, 1897-1907, 1946-1950, vol. 230, pp. 1186-1207, vol. 231, pp. 538-542; 39 and 40 Vict., c. 79.

tionable in principle the Education Act of 1876 might be, it could not be denied that it provided a means for securing the attendance at school of all children of school age. The position of the League on this question of attendance had been clearly stated by Chamberlain at the annual meeting in 1872:

Our one object, as stated in our programme, is to secure the education of every child in the kingdom, and in seeking to solve that problem, our experience and the evidence we receive from other countries, lead us to the conclusion that the only possible way is by universal and efficient compulsion. That is the great point in our scheme. The other things are mere corollaries, and part of the necessary machinery for carrying compulsion into effect.

Therefore, since the great object for which the League had been established was attained, its activities came to an end. The remaining work of the organization was transferred to the reconstructed Liberal Associations of the country, as part of the policy of the Liberal party. A letter which Chamberlain had written to Sir Charles Dilke soon after his defeat in the Sheffield election contest of 1874 indicates that even at that time the chairman of the Executive Committee was not entirely satisfied with the narrow foundation of the National Education League. "It may be well", he wrote, "to let the crude attempts at democratic organization, Radical unions, etc., etc., be disposed of before we talk over our propositions. I do not think the League will do. We must have a new organization, although our experience and acquired information may be useful". In this decision, Sir Charles read the death warrant of the Education League, and the birth certificate of the National Liberal Federation.<sup>1</sup> In that organi-

<sup>1</sup> *National Education League Monthly Paper*, vol. 3 (1875-1877), p. 1413; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 328, 329; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*.

zation the radical educational demands of the Nonconformists gave way to a broader programme which in course of time came to include the League proposals of 1869.

Now that a period of fifty years has elapsed since the Birmingham League began its campaign for a public elementary school system which should be unsectarian, compulsory and free, the religious difficulty still remains unsettled, although free and compulsory education has been in operation many years. While it is true that the course pursued by the League was biased by a narrow sectarianism on the part of the Nonconformist members, yet the contributions of the chairman of the Executive Committee and other directing members in awakening the people of England to their real educational needs should not be underestimated.

Chamberlain's entrance into Parliament and the cessation of his duties as chairman of the League resulted in the broadening of his interests and a consequent decrease in attention given to educational affairs. Even so, his zeal for educational progress continued. During the term of the Conservative Government, the extension of the board schools, further State control of the denominational schools and free education were his demands. In behalf of increased grants for education, he became a strenuous advocate in the House, contending that the position of Great Britain as a great commercial power in competition with other countries was dependent on the education of the people. In his opinion, "those spent most economically and wisely who spent most." He looked upon such expenditure as a commercial investment, or, to put it on higher ground, as one which brought large

vol. i. p. 178. Adams says that Lord Sandon's Act was a dismal failure since the authorities to whom the execution of the law was entrusted did no more than they were compelled to do. In 1880 the Liberal Government passed a bill compelling the adoption of compulsory attendance by-laws throughout the country. Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 333, 334; 43 and 44 Vict., c. 23.

returns in the reduced cost of pauperism and crime, and the increased welfare and prosperity of the country. But, as heretofore, it was not for the denominational schools that he urged these increased grants. He believed that the Board schools had fairly outstripped all competitors, and he therefore asked the House if they could with propriety continue to make enormous grants of money for institutions which to a certain extent were managed by irresponsible persons, and which he believed were comparatively inefficient for the purposes for which money was granted.<sup>1</sup> If the denominational schools were to continue, he held that representative control should be established. In the same year he contributed an article on "Free Schools" to the *Fortnightly Review* in which similar views were expressed, and a strong defense presented in behalf of gratuitous education. Since the principle of compulsion had been accepted, he contended that free schools should be established as a necessary corollary. Free schools, he said, might exist without compulsion, but compulsion had to be followed ultimately by free schools. In the lowering or entire abolition of school fees, he foresaw the real solution of increasing school attendance.<sup>2</sup>

When the Birmingham Radical accepted membership in Gladstone's Cabinet in 1880, he assumed his share of responsibility for the acts of the Government of which he was a member. Forthwith, his expressions of policy were tempered with a greater spirit of moderation than during his days of opposition. In his zeal for free education, Chamberlain received little support from his colleagues—a situation to which he referred on various occasions during his Unionist days. However, numerous utterances showed no diminution in his interest, though in all cases they were expressions

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 235 (1877), pp. 1072-1075.

<sup>2</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 27 (1877), p. 56.

of individual opinion, quite apart from Liberal Government creed. His feeling of sufferance with the existing condition was shown in a speech at the opening of a new Board school in Birmingham in 1883. With reference to school fees and free schools, he remarked that so long as the working classes were content to go on paying fees as well as rates and taxes for the education of their children, he did not know how any Government could interfere. Contrasting the situation with that in the United States, he could only marvel at their patience. Doubtless the editor of the *Spectator* reflected the opinion of the majority of Liberals as well as Conservatives when after a bold refutation of the arguments advanced by the advocate of free education, he declared: "Mr. Chamberlain's theoretical defense of Free Schools thus turns out to be altogether worthless."<sup>1</sup>

In February, 1884, a strong article in defense of free schools appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*; it was published anonymously, but was later referred to by Chamberlain as stating his views on education and published under his responsibility. Afterwards it became a part of *The Radical Programme* which received the limited endorsement of the Radical leader. Reference was made to the compromise arrived at in the Education Act of 1876, whereby a truce and not a peace was concluded, and the Liberal party expressly reserved its rights to reopen the question when a favourable opportunity should offer. The author proceeded to review the existing situation. He endeavoured to show that in the opinion of many people the system was unjust and unequal in the incidence of cost; that it was opposed to true economy and efficiency; and that its social and moral tendencies were harmful. The injustice and hardship of the system were especially evident in the "arbitrary, uncertain and tyrannical

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. x; Chamberlain, *Speeches on the Irish Question*, p. 259; *Times*, Jan. 16, 1883; *Spectator*, vol. 56 (1883), p. 78.

manner" in which school fees were levied. In the Board schools of Birmingham, the average fees were less than one half of those in Liverpool, while as a rule, the fees in denominational schools were considerably higher. In carrying out the principle upon which the law was based—that the fees should be adjusted to the means of the parents—again there was lacking impartiality and fairness. The power of remission of fees for the benefit of the poor was freely exercised in many of the large cities and towns, while school boards in other places wholly refused to remit fees and sent all children to the guardians to have their fees paid. The law presupposed the ability of the parent to pay; to escape compliance he was put upon proof of his inability, a practice degrading and humiliating under the most favourable circumstances. In concluding, the author remarked: "After seven years' painful experience of Lord Sandon's Act, in which the road to pauperism has been opened to thousands of respectable families, the solution of the difficulty as to the school fees of the poor, in any way short of their total abolition, seems to be as far off as ever."<sup>1</sup>

The views which received expression in the *Fortnightly Review* were definitely set forth as Radical policy in the election campaign of 1885. Although free schools did not receive recognition in Gladstone's election manifesto, Chamberlain proceeded to give prominence in the so-called unauthorized programme to the subject in which he had been interested for so many years. Since the strongest opponents of free education were to be found among the supporters of denominational schools, he especially directed his efforts to this group of electors. In his comments at this time, there is found a greater spirit of tolerance than had been displayed during the religious controversy of the 'seventies. Although

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 41 (1884), pp. 1-20; *The Radical Programme*, pp. 213-256.

he was not willing that free education should be given up, yet he emphasized that it was not his purpose to revive the religious controversy. The situation continued as in 1883 when he had remarked that he was inclined to ask advocates of denominational education whether they would be wise to raise again a controversy, to the settlement of which, with considerable reluctance and for a time at all events, the undenominationalists had submitted. The extinction of the denominational system had been the desire of the National League in 1870. Though it cannot be said that Chamberlain would not have regarded its extinction with approval in 1885, yet he took care to make clear the exact nature of his proposal at this time. In a speech at Warrington, he attempted to remove the misconceptions existing as to the scope of his programme:

I see sometimes a statement that it would destroy the denominational schools and put an end to religious education. These are questions of grave importance, which some day or other—perhaps at no distant day—will be discussed on their own merits. But I wish to say that they are altogether outside and apart from the particular proposal I am making. You might free the schools tomorrow without in the slightest degree affecting the position of the denominational system, and I think those who are interested in this system are extremely unwise in attempting to connect its existence with arrangements which are already condemned by public opinion and which really have nothing whatever to do with it.<sup>1</sup>

When asked if he would place voluntary schools on the same footing as Board schools, Chamberlain replied in a letter to the secretary of the Birmingham Catholic Union that the greatest difference which then existed between the two types of schools was that the church schools were not under any representative control. He was distinctly in favour of re-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Jan. 16, 1883, Sept. 19, 1885; Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 191.



moving this anomaly and of having the voluntary schools placed under popular control during school hours.<sup>1</sup>

Although Gladstone in the election campaign of 1885 did not recognize free education as a part of the Liberal programme, Chamberlain was by no means willing that it should be completely ignored. In conversation with the veteran leader, he named it as one of the three points which he considered indispensable to the starting of a Liberal Government. He did not ask that its principle should be adopted as part of the creed of a new Cabinet, but he felt it necessary that he should reserve his right individually to vote for it. As far as the prospective Government was concerned, he would be satisfied if a single declaration might be made; he did not ask that sustained support be given to a measure. Should the Liberal party be so far divided as not to show a unanimous front, he was willing that some other plan, such as a committee, might be pursued.<sup>2</sup> When, a few months later, the Liberal Government again held the reins of authority, the question of free education did not have the slightest chance of consideration. As a result of the exigencies of party politics, the Irish question was the one absorbing interest of the Liberal chief, and all thought of social reforms was thrust into the background. Then came the unexpected break in the Liberal ranks, and the joining of Radical and Tory hands for the preservation of the Union. Eventually this alliance brought to each group the realization that in other fields also agreement might come. Compromise, it is true, was to form a part of the agreement, yet from a Tory Government the dissentient Liberals gained greater concessions in the way of social reform than Chamberlain had ever dreamed of.

A prelude to the later consideration of the education ques-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Oct. 28, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, pp. 224, 225; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 184, 185.

tion by Parliament is found in the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1886 to report on the working of the Elementary Education Acts enacted from 1876 on. The Report of the Commission which had been presided over by Mr. Cross was issued in 1888. This document disclosed that though school boards in eighteen years had provided more new school places than had voluntary associations, yet there were still two places in voluntary schools to one in Board schools. The divided system of schools was approved by the Commission, and recommendations were made that the voluntary schools should receive support out of the local rates just as the Board schools did. Support was also given to the continuation of the system of having parents who could afford it contribute a substantial proportion of the cost of the education of their children in the form of school fees.<sup>1</sup>

The facts of the case as set forth by this Conservative Commission were necessarily to be taken into account when Chamberlain renewed his agitation for free education. As a member of a Liberal Government, he had not won over his party to his policy of free schools, he had not made any attempt to revive the religious controversy, and he had actually presented a plan for free schools which did not involve the destruction of the voluntary system. What was to be gained from the Conservative Government of which he was not a member and which was the recognized defender of the voluntary system? If free education were to be obtained, it followed as a necessary corollary that denominational schools could not be interfered with. Chamberlain's explanation of Conservative opposition to his proposals in 1885 was that they believed it would be fatal to the denominational schools.<sup>2</sup> A plan then had to be produced which would provide for their continued existence. In a speech at Birmingham in May,

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1888, vol. 35, pp. 208-223.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 354 (1891), p. 1753.

1888, he reviewed his position on educational matters and explained his policy for the future. Contrary to his expectation, the voluntary system had benefited by the Act of 1870; since that time the accommodation provided had increased seventy per cent. In dealing with the question of free education which he again stated he considered a natural and necessary complement of compulsion, they had two plans at their disposal. The first was the plan of the National Education League of 1870, that the denominational schools should not be extended. All the new schools should be Board schools, free from the beginning. By the process of "painless extinction", all schools would ultimately be national and free. Time and events caused him to recede from his earlier position, and he fearlessly announced to his constituents: "Now I say for myself—I do not speak for others—that proposal is no longer practicable. At the present time the number of denominational or voluntary schools has enormously increased. I do not think the nation is prepared for their painless extinction." He then proceeded to show the great expense which would fall upon ratepayers if they were forced to provide in board schools for all the vacant spaces. Such a situation forced him to the conclusion that they must take things as they were, and since the denominational schools had grown to such enormous dimensions, he did not believe any practical statesman would dare to propose a measure which would be followed by the immediate withdrawal of the system and by the subsequent expenditure that it would involve.

The second solution of the problem, which the speaker accepted as the reasonable one, would be to leave the voluntary system and the school board system as they were and to make both systems free without in the least degree altering the proportion of expense borne by each. The grants should be increased in a certain proportion which would bear comparison with the amount of the fees received at that time.

In considering the change of attitude on Chamberlain's part, one should bear in mind not only the development of the schools over a period of twenty years, but the more tolerant feeling displayed by both Churchmen and dissenters. His appreciation of the changed conditions was indicated in the remark that to him nothing was more satisfactory than the fact that so much of the prejudice, the bitter sectarian feeling which prevailed on both sides eighteen years before, had died out. Personally, however, he still held to his earlier conviction in favour of strict separation between secular and religious education, the secular instruction to be provided by the board at the expense of the ratepayers, while religious instruction, as far as it might be given at all, should be given by voluntary teachers; but he recognized that his system had not received popular support, and in deference to the will of the electors, he would bow to their decision. In discussing at that time the contention before the Royal Commission that voluntary schools should also be able to apply for assistance from the rates, he maintained his position held during the 'seventies. He did not believe that Parliament would ever allow a change unless it imposed certain conditions which would require that the denominational schools should submit to local control if they accepted aid from the rates. Such conditions he did not consider would be satisfactory to the friends of the voluntary system.<sup>1</sup>

Since the days of *The Radical Programme*, favour for gratuity in elementary education was gaining strength; by 1890 it had been adopted as part of the Liberal programme, though the extinction of the voluntary system was linked with the desire for free education. In that year, when no mention of the subject was made in the Queen's Address, an amendment in its behalf was presented by the Opposition. It was on this occasion that the former uncompromising Non-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, May 26, 1888.

conformist stepped forth as the champion of the voluntary system, and elicited from his former colleagues those taunts of inconsistency to which he had become accustomed. His defense of the system, as in 1888, was based on the expense which would be incurred by its extinction. Underlying the defense was the old conviction of non-belief in the denominational system; yet as "a practical man" viewing the situation as it existed, and fully conscious of his position as a Tory ally, he did not falter in his attack. When the Conservative Government agreed to accept the principle of free education, he was satisfied that actual legislation on the subject should be postponed until a later session.<sup>1</sup>

As events developed, the accomplishment of his coveted goal came sooner than even he had anticipated. In 1891, the Elementary Free Education Bill was introduced, and Chamberlain as the main instigator of the measure was among its foremost defenders. By the Bill, provision was made that for each child between the ages of three and fifteen years in average attendance at elementary schools in England and Wales, an allowance of ten shillings a year would be made out of funds provided by Parliament. Wherever the fee charged did not exceed ten shillings, education for children of the above ages would be absolutely free. According to the provision of the original Bill the age limit was placed at fourteen years; through Chamberlain's influence it was extended one year, though this concession did not entirely satisfy his demands. He held that it was very undesirable to put anything in the nature of a handicap upon the extension of education or to lessen the temptation of parents to keep their children at school as long as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Denominational as well as Board schools were thus to re-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 341 (1890), pp. 967-980.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890-1891, vol. 4, pp. 1-3; 54 and 55 Vict., c. 56; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 354 (1891), pp. 1932-1934.

ceive the benefit of the Government fee grant, and no provision was made, as demanded by Liberals and Nonconformists, that it should be accompanied by public control. In a letter written by Chamberlain in 1885, he expressed himself, as already noted, as desiring "to see the voluntary schools placed under popular control *during school hours*," though this opinion was not expressed in connexion with free education. Conservative influence, however, seems to have resulted in the modifying of this opinion, as is revealed in his speech before Parliament in 1891;

It is alleged by some that the grant of free education should be accomplished by the control of the voluntary schools; but it ought to be declared whether by control is meant real control or only popular representation. I, myself, should strongly urge any voluntary school to accept popular representation because to do so would strengthen the institution. But popular control is altogether a different thing. I will not at this moment go into the question whether it would be desirable or not; but whatever I may have stated on that matter in the past, and I do not think I have said anything inconsistent with what I am going to say, I have now come to the conclusion that it is not desirable, practicable, or politic to ask for public control over these schools.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Oct. 28, 1885; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 353 (1891), p. 1878. In the same speech, Chamberlain made the following interesting reference to his views in 1885: "In 1885, when I had no reasons for modifying my views on the subject, I went down to Bradford . . . and on that occasion I put forward the very plan of this Bill. I then stated that it was unnecessary to interfere with the denominational schools, and that it was undesirable to destroy such schools on account of the enormous expense that would be entailed by their destruction." *Ibid.*, pp. 1878, 1879. In the Bradford speech he did not actually make the last statement as his personal conclusion; he presented it as one of the objections to free schools. Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 222. See also the *Times*, Nov. 17, 1885, and *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 41 (1884), pp. 19, 20. The author definitely states his conclusion that the most practical means to establish free schools would be to abolish the fees in all classes of schools under their existing managements.

It sometimes seems that from the Liberal viewpoint the main association of the Liberal Unionist leader with this important Act was his defense of the voluntary system, which the Opposition charged was so inconsistent with his previous position. Be this as it may, the fact which should not be lost sight of is that in spite of the deeply rooted dislike of the Tory party for the cause of free education, he imposed upon the Conservative Government the task of introducing and carrying a measure so thoroughly radical as the Free Education Bill. In the opinion of Henry W. Lucy, Chamberlain was personally a more potent influence in political life at that time than he had been at any earlier period of his busy and prosperous life.<sup>1</sup>

When educational affairs again became the subject of serious contention, Chamberlain was a responsible member of the Unionist Government. The Education Bill of 1896, which the Colonial Minister had "a certain part and responsibility in preparing," was definitely a measure for the benefit of the voluntary schools. On this occasion he did not take a prominent place in the defense of the Bill in the House; in fact, it has been remarked that he was as a rule conspicuous by his absence from such debates. Within his own constituency, however, he announced his hearty support of the Bill. In his explanation of the measure he outlined the five great objects to be accomplished. The first was to preserve the voluntary schools from extinction. He reviewed his position on voluntary schools since 1870 when he had favoured their extinction, referring to the change in his position of seven or eight years ago due to the enormous increase of the system and the increased cost which its extinction would mean. A second radical change provided that the control and management should be decentralized. Should the Bill be

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, Henry W., *A Diary of the Salisbury Government (1886-1892)* (London, 1892), p. 403.

come law, he anticipated that there would be much greater freedom, and the tendency to stereotype all education according to an official standard would be checked in favour of local initiative and local experience. The third object was the constitution of a new educational authority. In the towns, authority was to be given to the town council; in the country, to the county council. This provision, he had previously explained, was in accordance with the principles advocated by the Birmingham League in 1870.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is interesting to note that in 1877 he had declared before the House that "he had always regarded as one of the worst features of the legislation of 1870, that the education of the people was entrusted not to town councils, but to another coordinate local authority, and he was convinced that the result would be the deterioration of both." The Bill further aimed to maintain and increase the efficiency of the education given. As a more complete solution of the religious problem, provision was made that where there was only one school, the managers should provide reasonable facilities for the voluntary instruction in religion of the children of any minority by the persons appointed by that minority for the purpose.<sup>2</sup> But this Bill so heartily endorsed by Chamber-

<sup>1</sup> The Elementary Education Bill prepared by the Executive Committee of the National Education League provided that the school boards to be established should be appointed by local governing bodies if the latter were elected by the ratepayers. In the rural districts where there were no bodies thus elected, the boards were to be elected by ratepayers in the parishes. *Post*, Dec. 18, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Apr. 23, May 2, 1896; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 232 (1877), p. 1871. Mr. Henry Lucy has made the following comment which is illuminating in this connexion: "Except when his own department was specially concerned, Mr. Chamberlain has abstained from coming to the front. If the Education Bill were bungled, if the Agricultural Rating Bill and Diseases of Cattle Bill store up trouble for the Government, the Secretary of State for the Colonies bears his share of Cabinet responsibility. But Mr. Chamberlain has no personal share in carrying these Bills through the House of Commons. In respect to this nothing



lain and violently attacked by Liberals was withdrawn for want of time,<sup>1</sup> and in the following year a new measure was introduced, which became law as the Voluntary Schools Act of 1897. By the Act, aid was to be extended to the voluntary schools at the rate of five shillings per scholar in average attendance, an increase of one shilling over the proposed provision made by the Bill of the preceding year. When Chamberlain was engaged in debate with Sir William Harcourt before the House, Conservatives must have been perfectly satisfied with their loyal defender of the voluntary system. In reply to Sir William's charges of inequality as provided by the new grant, he retorted: "The Voluntary Schools and Board Schools are, as he says, at present absolutely equal in regard to their claims upon the Imperial Exchequer—and the Voluntary Schools cannot get a penny from the rates. Is that equality? . . . Why, Sir, we are removing inequalities." He contended that the people who would benefit by the grant were the whole community of the ratepayers. As for Board school education, it was impossible that injury should result from the Bill.<sup>2</sup> Though clerical friends and party allies might be pleased with his position, it was natural that from former Liberal and Nonconformist friends should come expressions of deep disappointment and resentment. Point of view will determine largely one's verdict of approval or disapproval in regard to Chamberlain's educational policy during the decade from 1887 to 1897.

Even though the aid provided by the Act of 1897 alleviated somewhat the condition of the voluntary schools, it was still a problem in many cases to maintain them without aid from

was more regular than his absence from the Treasury Bench." Lucy, Henry W., *A Diary of the Unionist Parliament (1895-1900)* (London, 1901), p. 108.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 40 (1896), pp. 567 *et seq.*, vol. 41, pp. 1572-1581.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 45 (1897), pp. 1402-1409; 60 and 61 *Vict.*, c. 5.

the rates. A satisfactory solution, so far as clerical supporters were concerned, was reached in the Education Act of 1902, which provided for the transfer of the powers and functions of school boards to the town and county councils, likewise giving them adequate power over secondary education, and for the placing of the denominational schools upon the rates, this step being accomplished by an increased control by the public over secular education. Such an enactment aroused violent opposition from the Liberals who protested against what they considered the injustice of making all persons, irrespective of their religious creed, contribute toward the support of church schools with specific type of religious instruction, whereas provision was not made for complete local management.<sup>1</sup> To this measure, nevertheless, Chamberlain gave his consent and in public, at least, his loyal support. His defense of the Bill was largely based upon the establishment of a single local authority with its increased power over elementary and secondary education. The elimination of school boards meant the abolition of the cumulative vote, which had been so strenuously resisted by the National Education League in 1870.<sup>2</sup> That he could have as readily defended putting the voluntary schools upon the rates it is not so easy to believe. As late as 1894 he had shown that he was not favourable to such a proposal. In reply to a correspondent calling his attention to Cardinal Vaughan's plea for contributions to the denominational schools from the local rates, the following letter was received from Chamberlain's secretary:

<sup>1</sup> 2 Edw. 7 c. 42; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vols. 107-116 *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Apr. 24, 1902. In July, 1875, Chamberlain had said that it was originally intended that the town councils should elect the school boards but due as he thought "to certain eccentric Liberals" the proposition was withdrawn by the Government. He believed that such an arrangement would have been immensely to the advantage of the country. *Post*, July 31, 1875.

He is glad to see that you are not in favour of disturbing the educational compromise of 1870, and in his opinion the friends of the Church will be ill-advised if they take steps in this direction. Mr. Chamberlain is quite sure that even if they succeeded in obtaining a share in the local rates, which is doubtful, their success would infallibly be followed by an irresistible demand for local management. It is really a condition of the existing private management that there should be a substantial contribution in the way of annual subscriptions.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain's support, nevertheless, was not withheld in 1902, his position at this time being that sectarian jealousy and not a desire for educational efficiency was the prime motive in the agitation. "The fact is that some politicians have denominationalism on the brain and see it in everything as Mr. Dick did King Charles's head." Reverting to his original contention that the entire separation of religious and secular education was the only absolutely fair and logical system, he showed how it had been rejected by the people; as practical educationalists they had to consider what could be substituted for it. Since he was of the opinion that the extinction of the voluntary schools was impossible, the most that could be asked was that committees of management should comprise some representatives of the ratepayers and of the parents of the children. This object, he considered, had been accomplished by the Bill, though the managers were still to retain a majority on the committee. In reply to the Liberal contention that Nonconformists would be obliged to contribute to religious instruction in which they did not believe, he held that, on the other hand, unsectarian education in the Board schools was displeasing to Churchmen, Catholics and Jews. To his own constituents such was his defense; but within the House his participation in debate on the Bill was limited to a speech on the motion to apply the closure

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 3, 1894.

to it by compartments.<sup>1</sup> Further connexion with the measure was brought to an end when the Colonial Secretary set forth on an official visit to South Africa a few weeks later. His feeling of depression during the progress of the Bill found expression in a private letter to the Duke of Devonshire on September 22, 1902 :

The political future seems to me—an optimist by profession—most gloomy. I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores and hundreds, and they will not come back. I do not think the Tories like the situation but I suppose they will follow the Flag. The Liberal Unionists will not. We are so deep in the mire that I do not see how we can get out. If we give way now, those who have sacrificed much to be loyal will be furious, while our enemies will not be appeased. If we go on, we shall only carry the Bill with great difficulty, and when it is carried, we shall have sown the seeds of an agitation which will undoubtedly be successful in the long run.<sup>2</sup>

The Liberal Unionist's prediction proved to be true. The agitation of the Nonconformists and Liberals over the Act of 1902 was extreme, and it became one of the forces which caused the downfall of the Unionist Government in 1905. In the following year, a bill to bring about the separation of church and secular interests in the public schools was introduced by the Liberal Government. On this occasion, Chamberlain defended the arrangements secured by the Act of 1902. Referring to his maiden speech in the House of Commons thirty years before, he remarked :

And very curious it is to look back and see that the position was exactly the same as it is now, and that we have not proceeded

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 24, May 17, 1902; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 114 (1902), pp. 692-708.

<sup>2</sup> Holland, Bernard, *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, vol. ii, p. 284.

one step towards a final settlement. . . . I said that if the priest and the parson, and of course by that I did not mean to speak of particular denominations, but meant that if all clerical and ecclesiastical influence were withdrawn, there would be no religious difficulty. That was my view then, but I am not certain when we come to examine it, that that statement has helped us, or will help us much. My second statement was that the true principles of justice must be observed, and that the principles of the three Non-conformist Committees and the Birmingham School Board which I represented . . . that those principles which involved no sectarian instruction—offered then, as they seem to me to offer now, the only foundation on which to establish a fair and impartial system.

Confronting the situation as it existed, he stated his personal view that the dissenters had a grievance when the Act of 1902 came into operation; he believed, however, that they had very much exaggerated their grievance, and he complained that the Government was attempting to remove it by transferring the heavy burden from the Nonconformist to the shoulders of the Anglican and Catholic. Whereas the Nonconformist had been obliged to support the denominational religious teaching of which he disapproved, the Anglican and Catholic would be required to accept the instruction to be established by school boards in all schools, though to them it was altogether inadequate and insufficient. In 1876, the House of Commons first heard the voice of the Radical Nonconformist raised in opposition to Lord Sandon's Education Bill; in 1906, it heard the last parliamentary words of the Liberal Unionist in opposition to a Liberal measure, but still reverting to the subject of religious education, as he pled that "there should be universal facilities for those who dissented from the teaching in any given school to secure for their children the kind of religious education which they desired." Tory opposition in the House proved ineffective

in preventing the passage of the Liberal measure; the House of Lords, however, so amended the Bill as to change entirely its character, with the result that it was withdrawn by the Government. Though subsequent legislation has improved the situation, the State still continues its support of religious education.<sup>1</sup>

By reason of the prominence of the religious controversy with which Chamberlain was so intimately associated, it is quite possible to minimize his very substantial contributions to the cause of educational progress in England. From the formation of the National Education League with its advanced programme of unsectarian, compulsory and free education down to the Education Act of 1891, he was zealous in his support of every measure of educational reform upon which he believed the greatness and future progress of the British Empire was dependent. His deep interest in the opportunities of education for the poor was also shown in his opposition to the diversion of charity foundations established for the benefit of the poor to the education of the more prosperous classes. In cooperation with his devoted friend, the Hon. Jesse Collings, he strenuously opposed various bills introduced in Parliament for that purpose. In some cases his interest was a municipal one, as in relation to the proposal of the Charity Commissioners to inaugurate a new scheme of management and to establish a system of fees in the Free Grammar School of Edward the Sixth in Birmingham, a school which had been free for three hundred years; on other occasions it extended to foundations to which his consideration had been directed in a demand for fairness and justice.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 155 (1906), pp. 1017 *et seq.*, vol. 156, pp. 1338-1347, vol. 159, p. 1032, vol. 167, pp. 1735-1768.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3rd ser., vol. 238 (1878), pp. 785-788, vol. 300 (1885), p. 1575, vol. 335 (1889), pp. 339-341; 4th ser., vol. 17 (1893), pp. 787-789, vol. 30 (1895), p. 1370.

Since Chamberlain was denied the opportunity of directing and carrying through Parliament any of the important measures of elementary education with which he was so closely associated, proper appreciation of his untiring services may not be accorded him, but in his beloved Midland city stands a lasting and magnificent memorial—the University of Birmingham—to serve as a constant reminder to future generations of his valuable contributions to the cause of higher education. During the 'seventies he had sat for three years in the mayor's chair and by his inspiration and efficient services had made Birmingham a place famous for high ideals of citizenship. Twenty-two years later he became the guiding spirit in making possible the creation of a modern university, an institution which did not seek merely to imitate other universities, but rather aimed "to develop boldly for itself a broad system of education suited to modern times and to the practical needs of life in an active and essentially commercial city of the great Empire."

Mason Science College which had been endowed by Josiah Mason in 1880 served as the nucleus for the more ambitious University of the twentieth century. Four years after the medical faculty of Queen's College, which had been founded in 1843, had been transferred to Mason College, the institution was incorporated as a University College with Chamberlain as its president. The right of conferring degrees, however, had not yet been acquired by the growing organization. In the meantime, colleges located in Manchester, Liverpool and Yorkshire had been established as Victoria University, and had obtained the coveted privilege. When in 1897 the representatives of the Birmingham institution advised the affiliation of their college that it might be elevated to the same standard, Chamberlain insisted that it was only fitting that the Midland City should have a university of its own. He at once applied himself with enthusiasm to the task at hand.

A petition to Her Majesty in Council was prepared, praying that a Royal Charter might be granted for the establishment of a university in Birmingham. Through the influence of the Colonial Minister, favourable action was obtained in an exceedingly short period of time. At the beginning of the twentieth century the new institution was fairly launched. The second great task—the raising of funds—was most successfully accomplished through his own personal activity and inspiring leadership. Though the original aim had been to raise for the new buildings £100,000, Chamberlain announced at the first annual meeting of the Court of Governors of the University in January, 1901, that the donations had then reached the magnificent sum of £410,000, the largest sum which had been raised at one time in Birmingham for any public object. In response to his appeal, the Corporation of Birmingham also consented to assist in the maintenance of the new institution by contributing an annual grant from the funds of the city. In appreciation of his remarkable services, the creator of the University of Birmingham was named its first chancellor. When a site was acquired for the new university, and architectural plans for the new buildings were transformed into reality, a Chamberlain Tower was appropriately erected in the center of the well-planned group. From the beginning of the movement for a university down to his serious illness in 1906, Chamberlain took an active part in the development of an educational institution which would serve to the best advantage the future generations as well as the present. In accordance with the original idea, special attention was directed to the extension of scientific training and scientific inquiry in connexion with the trade and industry of the country. As a result of a generous gift of £50,000 from Andrew Carnegie, which was accompanied by the advice that a study of American universities should be made, Chamberlain arranged that a deputation be sent to the United



States for an extensive tour of inspection. The report of the deputation in favour of the American system of engineering education was adopted by the University Council. A Faculty of Commerce was also established—an innovation in the history of English universities. Though attention to the study of literature and arts has not been neglected, every effort has been made to create a modern university in which captains of industry and directors of commerce may be adequately trained.

A serious blow came to the newly-created institution when in 1906 the health of their beloved Chancellor suddenly failed. But others took up the burden, for as it has been said, he had not only created the buildings, but he had educated almost to his own high standard the men among whom he had lived for forty years. Doubtless the development of the institution has not been as rapid as if he had been permitted to complete the task in which he was so greatly interested.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the University of Birmingham will ever stand as a monument to the one who gave himself so unreservedly to the betterment of education in England.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, C. Alfred, *The Birmingham University* (London, 1906); Smith, C. Alfred, *Birmingham University in 1909* (London, 1909); Lodge, Sir Oliver, *The University of Birmingham*, reprinted from the *National Review*, August, 1908; Muirhead, J. H., (editor), *Birmingham Institution, loc. cit.*, Lodge, Sir Oliver, "Early History of the University and its Parent Institutions," pp. 61-87 (Birmingham, 1911); *Times*, Jan. 18, June 19, July 8, 1901. In the summer of 1924, the author conferred with Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Sir Gilbert Barling, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, and Mr. Frederick E. Moore, Assistant Secretary of the University, on this subject.

## CHAPTER V

### ACTIVITIES OF CHAMBERLAIN AS PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE

AFTER four years of parliamentary life, Chamberlain as a representative of the Radical element, became a member of Gladstone's Cabinet in an office of secondary importance—the Presidency of the Board of Trade. Though the office was not of the first rank, yet to a practical reformer of strong personality and pertinacity, such as had appeared in Chamberlain's municipal career, it disclosed possibilities for useful legislation. Unlike many English statesmen who attain high office, the Birmingham leader was a man of business; in his capacity as President of the Board of Trade he aspired to the same efficiency in his Department as he had secured in the screw industry in Birmingham where he had achieved such marked success. During the early sessions of the Gladstone Government, attempts for legislation by his Department, as well as by others, were severely hampered by lack of time, due largely to the resourcefulness of the Irish members in the art of obstruction. When in the special session of 1882 this situation was remedied by the establishment of new rules of procedure and the institution of two Grand Committees — on trade and on law, it was possible for the President of the Board of Trade to make more satisfactory progress with the programme which he had mapped out.<sup>1</sup>

Before entering upon a discussion of the legislation gen-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 266—vol. 275 (1882), *passim*.

erally associated with Chamberlain's term of office at the Board of Trade, it may be well to inquire into one phase of foreign policy with which the office was especially concerned in 1881 and 1882.<sup>1</sup> Upon the termination of the Commercial treaty of 1860 between England and France, the future relationship between the countries on matters of trade became the subject of agitation. It was the contention of certain members of the Conservative party that owing to the French departure from a policy of free trade and the establishment of a system of sugar bounties, England had suffered a subsequent decline in trade; consequently they asked that in the negotiation of a new treaty, the Government should reserve full liberty to deal with the question of bounties, and that a policy of fair trade, reciprocity and retaliation should supplant the one-sided free-trade relationship maintained by England.

Chamberlain as the sponsor of the trade of the Kingdom, upheld the position of the Government in adhering to their policy of unrestricted free trade. He not only maintained that the Government would be unable to make a treaty upon the conditions imposed by his opponents, but also sought to prove that the assertions of the Conservatives that English trade was declining and leaving the country, that wages had fallen, that suffering was intense among the working classes, and that the country was on the verge of ruin — that all these were entirely fallacious. Furthermore, he held that if industries could not be maintained in England without protection, it would be most imprudent and unwise to foster them by unnatural means. In his opinion, the so-called one-sided free trade was still the very best that could be devised with regard to British interests.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1881, vol. 92; *ibid.*, 1882, vol. 80, Commercial, No. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 264 (1881), pp. 1728-1816.

Although it would appear, therefore, that to one tenet of the *laissez-faire* school the Radical Cabinet Minister held firm, it was rumored that he may have had slight misgivings on the question of free trade even in these early days. Sir Charles Dilke has recorded in his "Manuscript Memoir" the strong support received from Chamberlain when in the course of the treaty negotiations, he indicated to France that if a satisfactory undertaking could not be arranged, England would make treaties with Spain, Portugal and Italy, in which the rate of duty on heavy wines produced in those countries would be reduced, while the rate of duty on the weaker wines of France would be increased. Although no public reference to such matters was allowed by Gladstone and Lord Granville, this approach toward reciprocity was permitted in dispatches. A treaty was finally concluded in February, 1882, by which England obtained the most-favoured-nation treatment without conceding her wine duties and sacrificing revenue, as had been demanded by France.<sup>1</sup>

But domestic policy rather than foreign affairs was the absorbing study of the President of the Board of Trade. Among the less important measures sponsored by his Department was an Electric Lighting Bill, by which municipalities might adopt electric lighting by obtaining the consent of the Board of Trade. Considerable advance was thus made possible in local government by relieving the corporation from the heavy expense of promoting a special bill in each case. At this time, electricity was still in an experimental stage. By the provisions of the Bill, experiments in the use of the new illuminant would be encouraged on a scale sufficient to ascertain if it could be made re-

<sup>1</sup> Milner and Others, *Life of Chamberlain*, p. 79; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. i, pp. 392-401; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, vol. 80, Commercial, No. 9.

munerative and at the same time to guard against the establishment of monopolies hostile to the interest of the municipalities. Licenses to supply electricity for a period not exceeding seven years might be granted by the Board of Trade to local authorities or with their consent to companies or private persons. Provisional orders confirmed by Parliament might be granted to the same authorities for a period determined by the Board of Trade. Though no limits as to profits, dividends, or issue of new capital were defined, the interest of the municipality was protected by the provision that on expiration of a period of twenty-one years or of a shorter period, if so specified in the application for the provisional order, the undertaking should be sold to the local authority if the latter should so desire.<sup>1</sup> During the enactment of the Bill, considerable discussion developed over the right of the local authority to exercise its powers without the consent of the ratepayers. It was the argument of the President of the Board of Trade that if Corporations were really representative of the true interests of the ratepayers—and he believed the history of the last thirty years warranted that assumption—then it was an unconstitutional proceeding to submit their opinions to a plebiscite whenever they went for new powers. He believed that a real security for honesty of local government was to be found in making the representatives thoroughly responsible.<sup>2</sup> The measure was enacted into law and served as another illustration of Chamberlain's appreciation of the rights and desirable development of the local authority.

In 1883, he succeeded in carrying through two important measures in the interest of trade—the Patents for Inventions Bill and the Bankruptcy Bill—their full discussion and

<sup>1</sup> 45 and 46 Vict., c. 56; Bunce, *History of the Corporation*, vol. ii, pp. 382-384.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 272 (1882), pp. 575, 608.

passage being assisted by the new Grand Committee on Trade. Chamberlain's attention was directed to the reform of the patent law by a private bill introduced by a Scottish member, Mr. George Anderson, in 1881. By the legislation then in force, monopoly rights afforded by patents were not really enjoyed by the inventors themselves but by capitalists or middlemen, since the fees exacted were so excessive as to compel the poor man to appeal to the capitalist for the necessary resources. It is interesting to observe that Anderson's proposed measure was too radical for the Radical Cabinet Member, though he gave his hearty approval to the principle of the bill. On more than one occasion, his so-called revolutionary ideas were to be tempered by his ideas as a business man. He believed that the objects they should have in view in considering reforms in the Patent Law were three-fold: to secure fair remuneration to the inventor, to stimulate invention, and so to carry out these two purposes as not to restrict the further progress of invention by an undue prolongation of monopoly rights. Considering these objects, he did not favour Mr. Anderson's proposal for the extension of the period of patents from fourteen to twenty-one years, and for the reduction of the fees scheduled, since he feared that sufficient funds might not be secured to meet the actual expenses of the Patent Office. He did not think that the Bill could be carried to a successful issue in the existing session, though he felt that it was a work that should be undertaken by the Government.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, a solution of the problem was undertaken by the President of the Board of Trade. The proposed Bill provided that the duration of patents should continue at the existing term of fourteen years; the new schedule of fees, however, involved radical changes. Though he did not recommend any interference with the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 262 (1881), pp. 562-590.

second and third payments then demanded by law, he advocated that the fee for provisional protection, which was extended from a nominal six months to twelve, should be reduced from £5 to £1. Further encouragement was offered to the poor but clever inventor by the reduction of the first payment from £20 to £3. The larger deferred payments Chamberlain believed would have a useful effect in weeding out useless patents. Provision was also made to cheapen and render more satisfactory the process of litigation where it had to be resorted to. The Bill received in general favourable criticism. Anderson who had been by no means pleased by Chamberlain's position in 1881 congratulated him upon the advance he had made in the matter. He considered the Bill and the speech in introducing it far more liberal than he had been led to expect from the speech of two years previous. Though there was considerable criticism that the total fees of £154 still required for a complete patent were excessive, on the whole the Act was a great improvement, not only in the facility provided in applying for a patent and in meeting the preliminary payments, but also in various innovations instituted at the Patents office.<sup>1</sup>

The reform of the Law of Bankruptcy was a somewhat more serious problem, as Chamberlain realized after his first attempt to deal with the question in 1881. His speech introducing the measure at that time disclosed a very careful study of the legislation then in operation, and a commendable plan for remedying the faulty conditions. The Act of 1869 had totally abolished a system of officialism and substituted one based on voluntary action, a method which led to absolute chaos and gave general dissatisfaction. It had proved decidedly ineffective in that it afforded facilities to insolvent persons to escape from the reasonable control and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 278 (1883), pp. 349-362; 46 and 47 Vict., c. 57; *Spectator*, vol. 56 (1883), p. 1179. The Patents and Designs Act, 1907, reduced the total fees to £100, 7 Edw. 7 c. 28.

supervision of their creditors by private arrangements wholly beyond the jurisdiction of any public court. In leaving to those who had already incurred losses the investigation of the bankrupt's affairs, and in placing upon them the obligation of exposing the misconduct of bankrupts, the law was practically nugatory in its effects. It was vital in the plain interests of public morality and commercial policy that bankruptcy should be dealt with not as a private matter but by a court cognizant of the public welfare. Chamberlain claimed from a study of the Reports of the Controller General in Bankruptcy that only seven per cent of the whole of the cases of insolvency were subject under the existing system to public control, while ninety-three per cent were left without supervision, and thereby presented the widest possible field for every kind of fraud and abuse. To remedy such a situation, he brought forward the Bill of 1881, based on three principles which he considered essential to a good bankruptcy law. In the first place, the assets of the debtor in each insolvency belonged to the creditors and they should therefore have the promptest and fullest control over those assets, subject to the least possible interference. Secondly, since the creditors in many cases could not give sufficient attention to the administration of the estate, they must of necessity appoint some person in the position of trustee who should be subject to official supervision and control. Lastly, in the interests of public morality, it had been clearly demonstrated that there should be some independent examination into the conduct of the debtor and the circumstances attending his insolvency, and some proper provision be made for the punishment of fraud and extravagance. Ultimately the Bill was abandoned, since there was no time for the discussion of a measure which gave rise to so many opportunities for debate.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 260 (1881), pp. 1056-1076; vol. 263, p. 1112; vol. 277 (1883), p. 825; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1881, vol. i, pp. 247-282.



Chamberlain's enthusiasm did not wane, however, and in 1883 he was successful in reforming the bankruptcy law which he had declared to be "a scandal to any commercial community".<sup>1</sup> The principles of the Government bill of 1881 were still adhered to, though there were naturally changes in details. In order that public interests might be properly protected, official receivers, sixty in number, were created, and upon them devolved the responsibility of inquiry into all cases of bankruptcy. In this capacity the receivers would be responsible to the courts as well as to the Board of Trade. In the plan of procedure provided by the Bill, the preliminary stage required the "making of a receiving order" which might or might not ripen into bankruptcy.<sup>2</sup> At the first meeting of the creditors held within a brief period subsequent to the order, they might decide to make the debtor a bankrupt, or as an alternative, resolve to entertain a proposal from the debtor to offer a composition or scheme of arrangement. Should the latter be accepted, proceedings would take place under the jurisdiction of the court, just as required in the processes of bankruptcy. In case of bankruptcy, political disqualifications were provided in order that the insolvent person might be conscious of his moral obligation to his community. If at any subsequent period, the bankruptcy was annulled, or if he obtained from the court a certificate that his bankruptcy was not caused by misconduct but was due entirely to misfortune, the disqualifications were removed. On the question of preferential claims, Chamberlain proposed radical changes. Previously a series of claims had been given preference, such as the wages due for a certain period prior to the bankruptcy, the

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Jan. 6, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Bill of 1881, it was required that in every case the insolvent would have to be declared bankrupt. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1881, vol. i.

landlord's claim for rent, imperial taxes and local taxes; by the new measures, all except the first were to be abolished. He felt "that in the case of bankruptcies, the claim of the individual creditor, to whom bankruptcy was a serious matter, ought to be regarded before that of the State or local authority". In this case, however, Chamberlain's opinion did not prevail. By the final measure, local rates and assessed taxes as well as wages, were given priority to all other debts, though there were quite limited restrictions as to time and amount. Preferential claims were also provided for in case of apprenticeship, and distraint upon the goods and effects of the bankrupt was allowed the landlord or other person to whom rent was due.

Attention was also directed to the case of debtors owing less than £50. Hitherto a large debtor could with ease relieve himself of all liabilities, while a poor man might be prosecuted for 30s. or 40s., and sent to prison without having any means provided to make a composition with his creditors. To redress this inequality, provisions were inserted which would make it more difficult for the large debtor to escape from his liabilities, while for the direct benefit of the poor man it was provided that the county court judge might make an order for the payment by a debtor who owed less than £50, by installments or otherwise, of all or any part of his debt. His proposal did not abolish in all cases imprisonment for debt, yet he felt that no longer did any inequality exist in the law as between rich and poor.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 277 (1883), pp. 816-835; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1883, vol. i, pp. 159-324; 46 and 47 Vict., c. 52. Chamberlain more definitely stated his opinions on imprisonment for debt during the debate on the Imprisonment for Debt Bill, introduced by George Anderson. The latter contended that the clauses relating to imprisonment for debt in the Bankruptcy Bill instead of abolishing the pernicious system, would only give it new life. He held that they would be found utterly

The proposed Act naturally incurred some opposition; it was the contention of Mr. Stanhope that it introduced into the bankruptcy system the curse of officialism, and especially the officialism of the Board of Trade. Great opposition was shown to clause sixty-eight which provided that all money received from trustees should be paid into the Bank of England; concessions were eventually granted enabling the Board of Trade, under certain conditions, to use local banks. The foresight of the President of the Board of Trade, however, in thus placing the use of the large balances at the disposal of the Government, was recognized. On the whole, opinion was generally favourable to the Bill, and its author was complimented on his able management of the measure. The Act proved to be wise legislation though it did not prove to be a final settlement. As has been remarked, "finality seems unattainable in any one Bankruptcy Act while human nature retains its turn for evasion". The reforms were amplified in 1887, in 1890, and finally in 1914 important legislation consolidating the bankruptcy law was enacted.<sup>1</sup>

To improve the welfare of British seamen the President of the Board of Trade exerted his noblest efforts during the greater part of his official term. During the 'seventies, the country had been aroused by Samuel Plimsoll against the

illusory and unworkable in practice. Chamberlain's reply was a defense of the clauses referred to, and a criticism of the proposed bill. He was ready to concede that the majority of Scottish members were in favour of the abolition of imprisonment for debt but he did not think that was any reason for forcing a similar law on England. He objected altogether to the Bill, on more grounds than one. He believed that under the Bankruptcy Act imprisonment for debt would be very much reduced, and that it would remain *in terrorem* over the heads of absolutely dishonest debtors. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 280 (1883), pp. 1628, 1629.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 277 (1883), p. 836, vol. 283, pp. 522-547; *Spectator*, vol. 56 (1883), p. 379; Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, p. 79; 46 and 47 Vict., c. 52; 50 and 51 Vict., c. 66; 53 and 54 Vict., c. 71; 4 and 5 Geo. 5, c. 59.

criminal shipowners who overinsured unseaworthy vessels that they might profit by their losses. Birmingham was foremost in expression of encouragement and sympathy for the cause. In 1873 the Town Council of which Chamberlain was a member passed a resolution that a petition be prepared in support of Mr. Plimsoll's "Shipping Survey Bill", and at a public meeting, his friend, Jesse Collings, spoke in behalf of British seamen and their ardent champion.<sup>1</sup> Two years later the outcry directed against "coffin-ships" had so caught the popular imagination as to induce Sir Charles Adderly (Lord Norton), President of the Board of Trade, to introduce a bill to prohibit such malpractices. Its later withdrawal brought forth from Plimsoll a vehement and earnest protest, and by the city of Birmingham he was given immediate support. A town meeting was convened by Mayor Chamberlain to express sympathy with Mr. Plimsoll and to consider the conduct of the Government in withdrawing the Merchant Shipping Bill. The chairman in his speech strongly defended the loyal seamen's friend, and urged the need for such a bill as had been introduced. With pride he referred to his own town to which "must be conceded the honour of having been the first to declare its intention on the question". Finally in the session of 1875, legislation of a kind was passed, giving the Board of Trade certain powers on a twelve months' lease. Though these powers were renewed in 1876, they were by no means efficient.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, when Chamberlain entered the Cabinet, it was natural that he should revive the agitation on the subject. As a result of his efforts, a Select Committee was appointed to make a complete inquiry relative to the losses

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, May 7 and 15, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 222 (1875), pp. 124-138, vol. 226, pp. 145-149; 38 and 39 Vict., c. 38; *Post*, July 29, 1875.

of British ships since the passage of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1873; and after having considered the operation of the legislation then affecting them, to advise any changes in the merchant shipping or maritime insurance laws required for the prevention of such losses.<sup>1</sup> In the session of 1880, the Committee of which Chamberlain was chairman confined its attention to the subject of losses which had occurred recently to ships laden partially or wholly with grain or seed. The recommendations resulting from this investigation were incorporated into a measure relating to grain cargoes. It provided that ships were to be loaded in accordance with definite regulations so as to prevent the shifting of the cargo, and thereby provide greater security of life.<sup>2</sup>

A second measure in behalf of merchant seamen—the Payment of Wages Bill—was also enacted into law in the same session. The first salutary reform that the measure aimed to effect was the abolition of the advance note which was customarily given by the shipowner or his agent to the seaman prior to his period of service. This note was a conditional order, generally for about a month's services, the validity of which was dependent upon the seaman's going to sea in a particular ship. The uncertain value of the notes resulted in their being cashed by so-called "crimps" who then made it their business by any means, honourable or otherwise, to see that those whom they had served were put on board their respective ships at the time of their departure. From evidence of the Select Committee on Shipping, these advance notes were considered the primary cause of

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1880, vol. xi. The Committee was not reappointed after 1880 so that a complete inquiry on the whole subject of merchant shipping was not carried out until after the appointment in 1884 of the Royal Commission on Loss of life at Sea. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-1885, vol. 35, c. 4577.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 255 (1880), pp. 1691-1700, vol. 256, p. 48; 43 and 44 Vict., c. 43.

the demoralization of the British seaman. When the victim recovered from the condition of debauchery in which he was generally placed on board ship, he was inclined to pay off the "crimp" by desertion at the earliest opportunity and thereby defraud him of his money, as the advance note would then be worthless. This proposal gave rise to the cry that freedom of contract between employer and workman was being interfered with, and to the contention that the real difficulty lay in the exceptional law by which seamen were liable to arrest without warrant and subject to imprisonment with hard labour for simple breach of contract. Violation of freedom of contract, in connexion with which "new members of the House had been invited to preserve the pristine purity of their political economy", was not looked upon with concern by Chamberlain. He held that that tenet of the *laissez-faire* school had already been interfered with when the interest of any particular class seemed to demand it. The consideration of the alternative proposal he desired to postpone until the following session when it was the intention of the Government to deal with the whole subject of merchant shipping. For the present he asked that the House accept the device suggested, as one step towards the abolition of the exceptional and anomalous legislation which they all deplored. By doing away with the advance note, it was anticipated that one of the main causes leading to the arrest and imprisonment of seamen would be removed. Nevertheless, later in the course of the enactment of the measure, a provision protecting the seamen from such injustices was incorporated in the Bill. Further protection was also conceded in the requirement that two days after the seaman's engagement had ended and he had left the ship, he should receive full compensation for his services. Chamberlain afterward explained that the provision would enable the Board of Trade to extend the sys-

tem already in operation for sending seamen to their homes immediately upon their arrival in port.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the abolition of the advance notes proved to be quite ineffectual. The investigation by the Royal Commission on Loss of Life at Sea in 1884-1887 showed that a practice of "bonus notes" developed which were even worse in their results. A recommendation for the restricted use of the advance note was therefore made, and in the Merchant Shipping Act, 1889, this advice was acted upon.<sup>2</sup>

In the session of 1882, protests against the Payment of Wages Act were made before the House because of the great losses which were sustained by owners and crews of shipping vessels, as a result of the provision abolishing the punishment of imprisonment for desertion from ships on the point of sailing. Such criticism had slight weight with the President of the Board of Trade. He indicated that he would endeavour to make arrangements to assist in the maintenance of order and to insure the fulfillment of legal obligations by the crews of fishing vessels, but "the Government was not prepared to reenact on behalf of a particular class of seamen the anomalous provisions of the old law, which gave the power of arrest without warrant and of summary imprisonment for a breach of civil contract, after similar powers had been abolished in the case of all other workmen".<sup>3</sup>

A quite different phase of shipping was also arousing considerable agitation during Chamberlain's term of office at the Board of Trade. In the *Pall Mall Gazette* of May 6, 1881, was inserted an article headed "The Horrors of an

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 252 (1880), pp. 729-733, 955 *et seq.*, vol. 254, pp. 595-596, vol. 256, p. 1185; 43 and 44 Vict., c. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1887, vol. 43, pp. 28, 29; 52 and 53 Vict., c. 46. See also 57 and 58 Vict., c. 60, sec. 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 273 (1882), pp. 758-765.

Emigrant Ship" by Charlotte O'Brien. The sensational picture depicted by Miss O'Brien led to the necessity of an investigation of the actual steerage conditions existing on passenger ships crossing the Atlantic. The result of the inquiry made by the Board of Trade showed that the charges were somewhat extravagant; nevertheless, the report revealed that according to modern standards, the accommodations were far from satisfactory. Chamberlain, however, in a Minute to the Board of Trade held that in consideration of the home surroundings to which the emigrant was accustomed, and the small fee paid for his passage, too high a standard could not be maintained. But an effort was made by inspection of the various transatlantic companies to make all comply with the regulations required by law.<sup>1</sup>

The agitation of the question in 1881 gave rise to a demand by certain members of the House in the following session of Parliament that although considerable improvements in emigrant accommodation had been effected since the investigation, yet the passenger acts relating to emigrant ships needed revision and reform. In reply to this contention, Chamberlain admitted the need of such reform, as the acts had been passed thirty years before, but he did not consider that it was possible to promise legislation on the subject. The President of the Board of Trade as a member of the Government was obliged to recognize the limitations in enacting legislation which he personally might consider very desirable. But it is quite probable that the programme of the Radical Cabinet Minister was somewhat disappointing to irresponsible Radicals when it did not comprise such extensive social legislation as they had previously expected. A marked evidence of his moderation is found in his reply to the proposal that the Government should erect depots at London, Hull, Leith and probably other places where emi-

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1881, vol. 82 [c. 2995].



grants should be received. It seemed to him that "if the Government were going to take such a step, it would be going very far in the direction of grandmotherly legislation, and it would be very difficult to say when the functions of State would stop in such matters".<sup>1</sup>

It was to a greater problem—the welfare of the merchant seamen—that his energies were primarily directed, and in their behalf he laboured with the deepest devotion. Though the Select Committee on Merchant Shipping was not continued after 1880, the very extensive Returns and Reports to the Board of Trade from 1881 to 1884 on various phases of the problem, provided Chamberlain with the detailed information which was so vital to an intelligent and fair presentation of the question in Parliament.<sup>2</sup> While he was awaiting the opportunity of bringing the whole issue before the Legislature for settlement, he was making an attempt to arouse in the members of the shipping trade and in the public mind a favourable attitude toward this much-needed reform. In an address in October, 1881, before the Liverpool Reform Club, attended by about forty wealthy members, he revealed a conscious effort to be conciliatory and at the same time to make his hearers cognizant of the seaman's needs. He said: "I agree with you that the prosperity of the shipping trade may be taken, at all events, as one answer to those who sometimes attack the shipowner. The management of this trade cannot be very bad, and the interests of life and property confided to you cannot be otherwise than carefully looked after, when we see this enormous extension of your business". But after this polite introduction, he proceeded to ask if the time had not arrived to undertake the serious and intelligent consideration of shipping

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 273 (1882), pp. 758-765.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1881, vol. 82; *ibid.*, 1882, vol. 62; *ibid.*, 1883, vol. 62; *ibid.*, 1884, vol. 71.

legislation. He proposed on this occasion the adoption of something like a shipping council which would act as a high court of appeal.<sup>1</sup>

A year and a half later, March 8, 1883, in a speech before a deputation of the Chambers of Shipping of the United Kingdom, his keen realization of the evils of the trade seemed to overrule his efforts for conciliation with those whose good will he was so desirous to obtain. Replying to the demand of shipowners that the power of arbitrary arrest without warrant should be reenacted, owing to the increased desertion of seamen, he asserted emphatically that it would not be reenacted by him, that he would have no part in restoring legislation which he did not believe by any possibility could be justified. His statements as to the great loss of life incurred during the preceding year—one seaman in sixty had been drowned—were not such as to gain a sympathetic position on reform. "I know absolutely no trade except that of shipowner in which it is possible for a man to lose life and property, and actually make a profit out of it". His proposals, even so, were pervaded with a spirit of justice, and they deserved a more favourable consideration than they received. He offered to submit to the shipping organizations for advice and practical suggestions the first draft of the shipping bill prior to its presentation to the House. Later events exhibited an unsympathetic response to the appeals of the President of the Board of Trade.<sup>2</sup> The shipping trade probably felt considerable hesitancy in assuming a friendly attitude toward one who in times past and present displayed cooperation with Samuel Plimsoll, a man who had made extravagant accusations against the shipowners as a body. It must be admitted, also, that Cham-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Oct. 28, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 9, 1883, Jan. 16 and 17, Apr. 3, 10 and 15, 1884; Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, pp. 172-175.

berlain himself had not been overcautious in his statement of the problem.

One year prior to the introduction of the large shipping measure of 1884, Chamberlain was responsible in the House of Commons for the Merchant Shipping Fishing Boats Bill, a measure which had already been accepted by the House of Lords. The Bill which was founded almost precisely upon the lines of the recommendations of a small committee appointed by the Board of Trade dealt with the question of apprenticeship to the sea-fishing service and the relationship existing between employer and seaman in regard to wages, discipline and other matters of mutual concern. Since the question of discipline had not been settled to the satisfaction of the owners of the fishing vessels in 1880, more stringent punishment was provided. In cases of wilful disobedience to any shipping command during an engagement, the seaman was liable to imprisonment; in cases of desertion, less severe measures were used in an effort to bind him to his contract for service. On the whole, the measure was favourable to the welfare of the shipping trade.<sup>1</sup>

But the one great shipping question before the English public continued to be that of loss of life at sea. Chamberlain opened the far-reaching contest of 1884 at Newcastle-on-Tyne on January 15 in a speech which was characterized by the *Spectator* as a "masterpiece of administrative clearness and strength". A few days later, the long-promised Merchant Shipping Bill was given its first reading before the House; on March 19 during the debate on the second reading, the President of the Board of Trade defended it in an able and vigorous speech of nearly four hours. "The main principle of the Bill," he asserted, "is the principle that it is a wrong, an inexpedient and an inimical thing that a man should be able to make a profit out of the loss of his

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 283 (1883), pp. 1446, 1511, 1593 *et seq.*

ship, with the lives he has in his charge." In the course of his speech, he proceeded to show the House that the loss of life at sea was excessive, and that it was increasing rather than diminishing; in the second place, that it was due to causes more or less preventable in their character; in the third place, that according to all impartial authorities an increase of care and precaution would diminish their losses; finally, that the state of the law and the practice of the trade undoubtedly tended to relax ordinary motives for care, and afford a temptation to negligence. An examination of the causes of loss of life revealed the main ones to be undermanning, overloading and over-insurance. To his mind, the existing law said to the shipowner: "Buy your ship as cheaply as you can, and send her to sea. If she gets to the end of her voyage, you will have made a very good thing of it; if she goes to the bottom, you will have made a very much better thing of it".

The Bill, therefore, proposed that the insured person should not gain by the loss of the thing insured. According to the principle of the measure, a contract of insurance should be a contract of indemnity. Furthermore, there should be a warranty that the owner, by himself, by his agents, or by his servants should use all reasonable means to keep his vessel seaworthy. In order to place seamen on a par with all other employees it was proposed to apply the Employers' Liability Act to seamen, officers excepted. The abolition of trial by jury in marine insurance cases was also incorporated in the Bill.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's speech did not fail to impress the members of Parliament with his earnestness, but on the other hand, it brought forth angry protests from shipowners and those working for shipping interests. The character of the situation proved to have been truthfully

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 64; *Spectator*, vol. 57 (1884), p. 80; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 288 (1884), pp. 686-753.

stated in the comment of Mr. E. Stanhope: "All I can say is that if ever a speech has been made, calculated to have the worst effect in passing the Bill, that speech has been made tonight by the right hon. Gentleman." The agitation against reform which had been started by the shipowners did not lessen in its vigour. In reply to the charges made against undermanning, overloading and overinsuring, the United Kingdom Steamship Assurance Association asserted that it could trace no instance of a vessel sacrificed for the insurance money. In such a crisis, the Government, weakened by their foreign policy, and looking forward to the more far-reaching reform of the franchise, were not willing to extend to the President of the Board of Trade the necessary support. Accordingly, the following July Chamberlain announced before the House that in view of the attitude towards the Bill and the limited time available for its discussion, he had reluctantly come to the conclusion that the Bill must be withdrawn. In fact, so keen was his disappointment, that he went at once to Gladstone and offered to resign.<sup>1</sup>

His efforts, notwithstanding, were not in vain. The withdrawal of the measure was followed by the appointment of a Royal Commission of which Chamberlain became a member. After the chairman, the Earl of Aberdeen, resigned from the Commission to accept the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, a new Commission practically the same in membership was appointed in March, 1886. The first Report rendered in August, 1887, contained a list of recommendations which bore testimony to the justice and desirability of such a measure as Chamberlain had proposed in 1884.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be claimed that the Conservatives were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 288 (1884), p. 762, vol. 289, pp. 1889, 1890; Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-1885, vol. 35, c. 4577; *ibid.*, 1887, vol. 43, c. 5227.

especially energetic in enacting these recommendations into law, yet some progress was made. In the Life Saving Appliances Bill of 1888, provision was made that every merchant vessel should be provided with such boats, belts and other life-saving apparatus as might be best adapted to securing the safety of passengers and crew. The following year, measures regarding pilot and wage requirements were enacted. Legislation in 1890 and 1892 gave effect to the recommendations of the Load Line Commission of 1885, and also required that provisions and water for the crew should be inspected. The most important action on the subject was taken by the Liberal Government in 1894 when a general act was carried, consolidating previous legislation on merchant shipping. The measure put into operation many features for which Chamberlain had so strenuously laboured in 1884, but it is significant to note that the revision of marine insurance, which he had considered one of the most vital points for reform and on which the Royal Commission of 1887 had made specific recommendations, did not form part of the act of consolidation. Mention should also be made of two merchant shipping measures enacted by Lord Salisbury's Government in 1897 when the former Radical leader was presiding at the Colonial Office. The acts supplemented the legislation of 1894 by providing that a ship might be detained when the safety of the crew was endangered as a result of undermanning and by removing certain exemptions from compulsory pilotage which had been in force.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding Chamberlain's participation in these developments, a few words are still necessary. During the first year that the Commission carried on its investigation, he assumed an active part in the hearing of evidence, but in the

<sup>1</sup> 51 and 52 Vict., c. 24; 52 and 53 Vict., c. 46; 52 and 53 Vict., c. 68; 53 and 54 Vict., c. 9; 55 and 56 Vict., c. 37; 57 and 58 Vict., c. 60; 60 and 61 Vict., c. 59; 60 and 61 Vict., c. 61.

spring of 1886, a period of intense political activity, he was not present at any of the sittings. In a speech at Birmingham the following year, he assured his constituents of his continued interest in the loss of life at sea—a statement which was substantiated by the Act of 1888, since this measure was carried through Parliament at Chamberlain's instance, as a part of the general Unionist understanding. He did not participate, however, in the debate on any of the shipping measures, a situation by no means difficult to explain, since in no case was the rabid opposition of the shipping trade aroused, and all the measures were enacted into law with but limited discussion.<sup>1</sup> Even though the Liberal Government gained the credit for dealing at large with the whole problem, including that of passenger emigrant ships, to Chamberlain must be awarded the praise for arousing popular interest in the subject, and for bringing into operation the Royal Commission which verified the truth of his contentions and by its Report made possible the services rendered to the merchant marine in the legislation of the next decade and a half.

Regardless of Chamberlain's failure to carry the Merchant Shipping Bill in 'eighty-four, his five years at the Board of Trade resulted in the enactment of measures of real constructive value. In addition to the efficient work which he carried on in his own Department, his interest in all Government measures which showed possibilities of advancing social progress was noteworthy, as also were his efforts on the public platform in directing the attention of the people toward the utilization of their democratic privileges to promote the contentment and welfare of the whole population.

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-1885, vol. 35, c. 4577; *ibid.*, 1887, vol. 43 [c. 5227]; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vols. 325-329 (1889), vols. 341-345 (1890), 4th ser., vols. 2-5 (1892), vols. 22-29 *passim*. In Chamberlain's article on "The Labour Question" in the *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1892, he referred to the need of more effective legislation in behalf of British seamen. *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 32 (1892). p. 707

## CHAPTER VI

### CHAMBERLAIN AND DISESTABLISHMENT

"I am an English Non-conformist—bred and born in Dissent—and I am opposed from honest conviction, to anything in the nature of State interference with, or State aid to, religion." These words were spoken by Joseph Chamberlain in 1885 at the very peak of his radicalism; nevertheless, throughout his career there was no variation from his personal belief that the welfare of the State would best be served by an independent church.<sup>1</sup> His political attitude, however, toward the realization of his conviction was affected by the changing character of the Established Church and by party exigencies.

Chamberlain was reared in a Nonconformist atmosphere in which there was little sympathy for adherents of the Establishment. As his education and business experiences brought him in contact with few liberalizing influences, he came to regard the Established Church as an institution of religious bigotry and oppression.<sup>2</sup> John Morley in describing Chamberlain's circle of friends at Birmingham during the 'seventies reminds his readers that in that decade the tradi-

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 194. One of Chamberlain's last statements on the subject of disestablishment before the Commons was to this effect. *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 134 (1904), p. 412.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, p. xix. A good illustration of the attitude of the Church toward social progress was shown in its failure to support the agricultural labourers when in 1872-1874 they sought by organization and strikes to improve their condition of life. *Spectator*, vol. 46 (1873), pp. 1117-1119.



tional feud between Churchman and Unitarian was still alive and deep in the town that had been the home of Priestley. Since feeling went so far as "to check intermarriage and commensality," the Church of England was unrepresented in the group which gathered at his fireside. A most favourable opportunity was provided the host to contrast the public-spirited character of such Nonconformist leaders as George Dawson, Dr. Dale, Charles Vince and Dr. Crosskey with prominent clergy of the Established Church who exhibited so slight an interest in social and political progress.<sup>1</sup> The splendid record of public service held by the Church of the Messiah, of which Chamberlain was a member, presented another contrast to the more limited activities of the Church of England in many communities.<sup>2</sup> In Birmingham the Unitarians were one of the most important sects and were distinguished for their liberal services on behalf of science, art, education and philanthropy. Local associations were, therefore, such as to strengthen his conviction "that in the great struggle for political liberty which had been going on for some hundred years, that body [the Unitarian Church] small as it was, had always been on the side of progress and on the side of the people."<sup>3</sup>

The first important agitation in which Chamberlain was involved developed in 1869 when the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill was before Parliament. In that year the Town Hall was the scene of an enthusiastic meeting arranged by the Liberals to give their approbation to the measure. On

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, vol. i, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> In a history of the Sunday schools conducted by the Church of the Messiah, it is stated that ten mayors of Birmingham contributed to the work of the schools. New, Herbert, *Centenary of the Church of the Messiah Sunday Schools—Sketch of the History of the Schools, 1788-1888*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Marris, *Joseph Chamberlain, the Man and the Statesman*, p. 47; *Post*, Sept. 21, 1868.

that occasion, Chamberlain delivered his first Town Hall speech in seconding the resolution which pledged the Borough to support the Bill.<sup>1</sup> Not long after Parliament gave its sanction to the disestablishment of the Irish Church, a programme of activity directed towards the further separation of Church and State in the United Kingdom was set in motion by the Liberationists. The organization supported by this group had been founded by Edward Miall in 1844 as the British Anti-State Church Association. Nine years later it became the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain as a member of this Society lent his assistance to arouse popular enthusiasm among his fellow-townsmen prior to the presentation of a resolution to Parliament for extending the policy of disestablishment. At a conference of the friends and supporters of the Liberation Society in December, 1870, he proposed a resolution in support of the impending motion which was to be moved by their staunch leader, Mr. Miall. He suggested in his forceful speech that the attack should not be directed against the internal condition of the Church, but rather that it should be assaulted from without. His charge, therefore, was based on his belief "that Establishment in England was an injustice; that it had tainted legislation at its source for many years; that it had hindered much that was good and produced a great deal that was bad; that it had embittered social relations, and created and fomented throughout the country an intolerance in thought and action that was very much to be deplored."<sup>3</sup> A local Town Hall meeting at which Chamberlain presented a petition to the House of Commons embodying a similar resolution was also held at a later date. He had definitely allied himself with the Liberationist

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Miall, Arthur, *Life of Edward Miall* (London, 1884), pp. 95-98, 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 206 (1871), p. 474; *Post*, Dec. 15, 1870.

forces which aimed to bring disestablishment within the field of practical politics. The files of the *Liberator*, the official magazine of the Liberationist Society, reveal his active co-operation with the organization during the 'seventies. In June, 1874, he became a member of the Executive Committee elected at the Triennial Conference, and he accepted reelection in 1877.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain's active participation in the educational controversy of the 'seventies served to strengthen his adherence to the Liberationist cause. Though the Education League did not represent the views of the dissenting sects alone, the Central Nonconformist Committee and its allied branches laboured without reserve to protect the interests of their members against those of the Established Church. Their main attack was directed against the payment of fees to denominational schools, made possible by the twenty-fifth clause of the Education Act of 1870. The depths of feeling which had been aroused was strikingly expressed by Chamberlain in a Nonconformist conference at Manchester in January, 1872, when he said: "This payment of fees is the last straw which roused us to throw off the whole burden; but once aroused to this position we shall not rest until every vestige of ecclesiastical supremacy has been swept away, and complete religious equality has been secured for every section of the community." The Manchester conference is significant also in another light. It not only affirmed its unqualified adherence to the policy of abolishing ecclesiastical supremacy, but it also resolved, on a motion presented by Chamberlain, that "the time had come for the Nonconformist adherents of the Liberal cause to insist on a thorough and consistent application of the principles of religious equality in the public policy of the leaders of their party."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Liberator*, vols. 19-20 (June 1, 1874), p. 115; vol. 21-23 (Mar. 1, 1875), p. 42 and (June 1, 1877), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 19.

The agitation was continued later in the year when a conference on disestablishment was held in Birmingham. Chamberlain presided at the public meeting held in the Town Hall, October first, and in the indictment which he brought against the Church, stated that it did not secure the practice of Christian charity or toleration, that it did not secure the administration of religion to poor and neglected districts, that it had not brought the desired sympathy between the ministers of religion and the people to whom they ministered. The time had come, he therefore concluded, to insist on the complete application of the doctrines of religious equality.<sup>1</sup>

The demand that the leaders of the Liberal party give their consideration to the establishment of a "free church in a free state" was more emphatically set forth in a *Fortnightly* article of September, 1873.<sup>2</sup> Considering the dissension which had developed in the Liberal party largely as a result of the religious difficulty arising out of the educational settlement of 1870, one wonders at Chamberlain's proposal that the adoption of a policy of disestablishment would remove party discord. Yet the following year in a subsequent article, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme," he announced the separation of Church and State as the one great question of immediate interest to Radical politicians, on which the Liberal party might be summoned to unite or reform. Gladstone as a most ardent defender of the Church had quite naturally refused to consider such a proposal. But Chamberlain felt that the rapidly changing conditions might yet cause the Liberal leader to reconsider his refusal. "If, however, Mr. Gladstone feels that he has done his work," he concluded, "his worst enemies will admit that he has earned his right to repose. His absence from the field may alter the character of the battle, but will not delay the encounter

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Oct. 2, 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 20 (1873), pp. 293-296.

nor change the fortunes of the fight. "Great crises do not wait for leaders, but create, or do without them." The author proceeded to discuss at length the deeply rooted distrust of the Church and its ministers due to their "bigoted prejudices" and resistance to various reform movements. He believed a programme of disestablishment and disendowment would be popular not only among the dissenting element, but also with the working classes. In all questions which had arisen between employers and employed, he charged that the clergy, as a class, with some very noteworthy exceptions, had supported the rich against the poor and had sympathized with the few against the many. He believed that his Liberationist policy would gain further favour in his proposals for disendowment, whereby the vast sums held by the Church might be employed for the public good. The best disposal of the revenues, he suggested, might be the creation of a great system of national, free and unsectarian education which would fit the children of the nation to assume their duties as citizens of a great State.<sup>1</sup>

The scorn of the Whigs provoked by such boldness did not damp his enthusiasm for the cause. A few months later when presiding at a conference of the Liberation Society, he said that every great question went through three stages, the first was that of agitation, and that was past; the next was discussion, and that had come; the last was settlement, and that was very near. With this optimistic view of the situation in mind, he, in a speech at Sheffield in November, directed attention to the question of the disposal of the church property. Here he accepted the view of the Rev. Dr. Crosskey who considered that the Church was a branch of the State and that when the State decided to resign the ecclesiastical functions, the money it had hitherto appropriated to that cause would be applied to other purposes. Inefficient educa-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 22 (1874), pp. 420-428.

tion, sanitary reform and other social measures dear to Chamberlain's heart would find their accomplishment possible by the funds available. To set free a new sect with £90,000,000 endowment, he considered would be an unmixed evil. Disestablishment he therefore presented to the Liberal leaders as the one great question—in fact, he held there was no alternative question of equal magnitude and urgency—which would be most likely to reunite the various sections of the party.<sup>1</sup>

When Chamberlain entered upon his parliamentary career, his zeal was unabated; in fact, it seems to have been at its height when he spoke before the Nonconformist Union at Leeds in January, 1877, and proclaimed the Establishment as "the greatest obstacle to political, social and intellectual progress."<sup>2</sup> His programme for the Liberal party, however, was not to be fulfilled. At this inopportune time, the Eastern Question burst out in full conflagration, and displaced all other subjects of less urgency. Chamberlain was prominent among those who gave attention to the foreign situation. When in 1880 he became a member of a Liberal Government in which the majority was hostile to his ecclesiastical policy, he apparently realized the utter futility of seeking to make disestablishment, at that time, a practical issue. Notwithstanding this situation, he remained steadfast in his conviction. Upon receiving a letter of inquiry relative to his position on Welsh Disestablishment, he replied: "My opinions are well known. I think the establishment injurious to religion and an injustice to all outside the pale."<sup>3</sup> In the following year, his speech at Newton disclosed his interest in a cause which he hoped might soon come to life.

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Feb. 10, Nov. 25, 1875; *Liberator*, vols. 21-23 (May 10, 1877), p. 76; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 27 (1877), pp. 834-852.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Jan. 11, 1877.

<sup>3</sup> *The Radical Programme*, p. 192; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 234 (1877), pp. 449-456; *Times*, Dec. 3, 1883.

The question of religious equality is closely connected with the question of national education. The question has been neglected in the past; even now it does not receive the attention it should, mainly because of ecclesiastical prejudice and sectarian differences. I hope the time is coming when all inequalities may be removed and the dominancy of a sect may no longer interfere with the cause of religion and I believe all will gain in enthusiasm, and will do even more than now to promote the service to which they have devoted themselves. In saying this I speak of course my own individual opinion. This is not a matter as to which I am entitled to speak in the name of my colleagues. My opinions on this subject have not changed since I took office, and I can assure you that whenever the time comes to give them practical application, I hope and believe you will not find me wanting.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later in a less cautious moment, when he was engaged in a strenuous pronouncement against the upper House, he boldly proclaimed: "No, gentlemen, I have no spite against the House of Lords; but as a Dissenter, I have an account to settle with them, and I promise you I will not forget the reckoning."<sup>2</sup>

The advent of the Tories to office in June, 1885, left Chamberlain unfettered. The following month, *The Radical Programme*, to which he had contributed a sympathetic preface, set forth as one of its projects the cause of disestablishment and disendowment. That his hopes were at one with the policy indicated was quite clear in the ensuing election campaign. In a letter to the Liberal Committee of Kilmarnock he wrote:

I rejoice to think that the time is not far distant when the question of Disestablishment, both in England and Scotland, will occupy a foremost place in the Liberal programme. I am

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

convinced that the next general election will give great impetus to the movement, and will throw much light on the position of the State Church in agricultural districts.<sup>1</sup>

According to a later speech made during his Liberal Unionist days, he even aspired to make disestablishment the first item in the Liberal programme. His failure to realize even its insertion in the authorized programme of the party he recorded in an address at Edinburgh in 1887 after the estrangement from his former Liberal chief: "Two years ago Mr. Gladstone, leader of the Liberal party, used his political influence in order to exclude from the Liberal programme the question of the disestablishment of the Church, which some of us had deeply at heart."<sup>2</sup>

In 1885, therefore, Chamberlain's personal wishes gave way to party interests and public announcement of this fact was made when he retorted to Lord Salisbury's political cry that the Church was in danger:

Is it not a strange thing that this cry of the Church in danger should be raised precisely when the most strenuous advocates of disestablishment—like myself, for instance—had publicly declared that they did not believe that this question is within range of present politics, or that it can possibly receive its solution during the next Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

In expressing his views on Scotch disestablishment at Glasgow, however, he embraced the opportunity to state

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, pp. 156-212; *Spectator*, vol. 58 (1885), p. 1135.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Feb. 13, 1889, Oct. 14, 1891; Chamberlain, *Speeches on the Irish Question, 1887-1890*, p. 34. A letter from Chamberlain to Dilke in 1885 at the time of the November election is also of interest in this connexion. He wrote: "It does not look as if the Tories would have the chance of doing much mischief; but I should much like them to be in for a couple of years before we try again, and then I should 'go for the Church.'" Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. ii, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, Nov. 9, 1885.



definitely his personal position on the whole problem. Prior to this occasion, the leaders of the Liberal party—Gladstone and Lord Hartington—had both declared their readiness, without reference to personal feelings or anything in the nature of English prejudice, to deal with the subject as a Scottish matter and as a question solely and entirely for the decision of the Scottish people. To Chamberlain this was not entirely satisfactory; for while leaders were waiting for a declaration of Scottish opinion, candidates seeking to be returned to Parliament were waiting for some future declaration on the part of the leaders. The question appeared to him to be of such great and serious importance that it should not be treated as a shuttlecock between different parties in the country. Having received numerous requests to deal with the subject, he felt under the existing situation that, although he had no authority, he was not justified in passing it by. Then followed the frank confession of an English Nonconformist—born and bred in dissent—opposing anything in the nature of State interference with or State aid to religion. In his opinion, the State overstepped its proper field of duty and trespassed on religious equality and religious freedom, when it singled out any form of religious belief for its care, or any religious organization for its special patronage. In addition he thought that religion itself had always suffered by its connexion with the State and that no Church had ever existed in such connexion without losing something of its independence and its freedom when it became a department of the State. For political as well as for social reasons, and in the interest of religion itself, he was a Liberationist. He would free the Church from State control, whether in England, in Scotland, or in Wales. He added that his opinion on the subject was doubly strengthened by his belief that the appropriation to the service of a single sect, of funds which were originally designed for the benefit of the whole nation,

was an injustice. He hoped to live to see the time when voluntary zeal would provide for religious work and would set free those vast endowments which were originally intended for the improvement of the condition of the poor and the education of the people as well as the special objects to which they had been exclusively devoted.<sup>1</sup>

It is readily seen that the religious question did incidentally play a part in the election campaign of 1885, though as Dilke remarked, the disestablishment of the Church of England proved to be anything but a good election cry. When, the following spring, a Liberal Government was again in power and Chamberlain had accepted office at the Local Government Board, he had occasion to explain his position in failing to give his support to the issue when it was brought before Parliament. A letter from his secretary to certain Mold electors who had expressed regret that he had not taken part in the debate or division on a motion for the disestablishment of the Church of Wales read as follows:

Mr. Chamberlain is unable to recognize any right on your part to question his actions as a member of Parliament. You appear, however, entirely to misunderstand the position. The Government are not able, partly in consequence of the pressure of other business, and partly owing to statements before the election by Mr. Gladstone and others, to attempt the final settlement of the question of Church Establishment during the present Parliament. Mr. Chamberlain has frequently stated that he is personally in favour of disestablishment not only in Wales and Scotland, but also in England; and whenever the proper time comes to give practical effect to his opinions he will be pleased to take his part in the settlement of the great question. In the meantime, he does not consider it necessary either to vote or speak on the occasion of an abstract resolution which can have no immediate practical effect.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-196.

<sup>2</sup> Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, p. 193; *Times*, Mar. 16, 1886; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 303 (1886), pp. 305, 358-361.

His later opposition to Gladstone's Irish policy and subsequent resignation from the Cabinet did not tend for several years to weaken his allegiance to the cause. When in 1886 he was criticized for his support of the retention of the tithe, he explained that he was strongly in favour of disestablishment, but the abolition of the tithe would tend entirely to the advantage of the landlords who would be enabled thereby to obtain a proportionately higher rent. His objection was not to the tithes as such, but to their application for the support of the State Church.<sup>1</sup>

From this time on, the agitation centered primarily upon the disestablishment of the Church in Wales. In a letter to the *Baptist* in 1887 he upheld the cause of Welsh disestablishment, the prospects of which were "shadowed and darkened by the sudden introduction of a new subject of political contention." But the support given by Chamberlain and a few other dissenting Liberals to the cause of the Welsh Nonconformists failed to induce them to renounce their allegiance to the Liberal party. Chamberlain was much displeased with the situation and plainly stated his views on the subject in a letter to an Aberystwyth correspondent. The Nonconformists of Wales and elsewhere had put their faith in Mr. Gladstone and allowed him to postpone indefinitely Welsh disestablishment because of his Irish policy. They had turned against Chamberlain and other supporters who had stood by disestablishment when there were none other to help them. "I admit I am bitterly hurt," he said, "by what I regard as an act both of impolicy and ingratitude. I shall not, on that account, alter my opinions on the question, but I must leave the Nonconformists to find representation for their views from their new leaders." Hence, he concluded, he had not intended to do more than to vote for Mr. Dillwyn's recent motion in favour of disestablishment.<sup>2</sup>

In February, 1891, his position evidently continued to be the same, for he again voted with the Welsh members on a similar measure. His tone was more conciliatory in a speech made somewhat later at High Mead, South Wales. Nevertheless, he frankly said that he did not pretend that the majority of the Unionist party agreed with him and he did not pretend that the Unionist party, if they should get a majority, would deal with disestablishment.<sup>1</sup>

When in 1892 Chamberlain accepted the leadership of the Liberal Unionists in the House of Commons, he entered into close affiliation with the Tory party, for generations the recognized champion of the Established Church. Consequently, just as during the 'eighties, for the sake of party harmony he had submitted to Gladstone's authority in postponing the settlement of the religious difficulty, so in the 'nineties, for the preservation of the Union he realized the necessity of making sacrifices to his new allies, even to the extent of entirely discontinuing his former attacks upon the Church of England. Therefore, one finds in his address before the Nonconformist Unionist Association in London a somewhat different note.

I do not think you will find anywhere a more ardent or a more consistent supporter of disestablishment than myself. But it is neither defensible in principle nor in policy to put this question forward to the exclusion of every other. It is not right to do evil in order that good may come. It is not right to purchase the disestablishment of the Church at the price of the disintegration of the empire.<sup>2</sup>

When the Liberal Government of 1892-1895 attempted to deal with the religious situation in Wales, Chamberlain showed a desire to stand by his own convictions and at the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890-1891, p. xxv; *Times*, Feb. 23, Oct. 14, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1892.

same time be loyal to his allies. When Asquith brought in a bill for suspending the creation of new clerical interests in the Established Church in Wales and Monmouthshire, a measure which he stated would be the first step toward complete disestablishment and disendowment, Chamberlain and fifteen other Liberal Unionists abstained from voting. Later in the session in debate on Gladstone's motion to curtail discussion on the Home Rule Bill, Chamberlain asserted that he did not believe there was a genuine majority on any single item of the Government programme. The Welsh voted for Home Rule because they wanted disestablishment; the teetotallers for disestablishment because they wanted local veto; and the Labour party for everything because they wanted the eight-hour day.<sup>1</sup>

In the following session the Home Secretary introduced a bill for the complete termination of Establishment in Wales as anticipated in the measure referred to above. As the bill was not proceeded with after the first reading and was finally withdrawn toward the close of the session,<sup>2</sup> it was not necessary for Chamberlain to register his veto on the question; however, prior to the withdrawal he was called upon by Tory critics to explain what they regarded as a sympathetic endorsement of the cause of the Welsh Nonconformists. In a letter to the *Times*, Chamberlain made it plain that he had always reserved his own liberty of action on the question and that this right had been recognized fully by the leaders of the Conservative party—Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour. But he added that if the question became one which threatened the existence of a Unionist Government, he should feel that the lesser should give way to the greater, and sooner than

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 9 (1893), pp. 204-214, vol. 16, p. 665; *Parliamentary Record*, 1893-1894, pp. xii, xiii; Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain, His Life and Public Career*, vol. i, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 23 (1894), pp. 1455-1485, vol. 27, p. 331.

bring in a Home Rule Government, he should lay aside his opinions on the subject. A few months later he voluntarily chose to express his views on the recent developments in disestablishment which had taken place. He still held to the opinion that the Church could be of greater use if it were altogether released from the trammels of State control and from the invidious privileges which the connexion brought with it. To explain his position regarding the Liberal proposals he continued:

But although that is my opinion, it does not seem to me that it is with that object, or with any other object like it, that the Welsh members are clamouring for disestablishment. They do not want to increase its influence, and if I am right in gathering from their own statements which appear in the Welsh vernacular press, they want to cripple the Church of England, they want to strip it of all its possessions and send it out naked into the world, and they want to disregard all its venerable tradition and to pay no attention to its sentiments, the deep-rooted sentiments of regard with which it is viewed by its supporters and members. Well, then, I say if that be the case, although I shall give my vote to the principle, I do not express my sympathy with methods by which that principle is to be carried into effect and I think it is very different from the spirit in which the Liberals and Nonconformists of old would have treated this question.<sup>1</sup>

His Tory friends had little reason to complain of such a restricted acceptance of the proposals; they were even better satisfied with his remarks at Heywood a month later: "You may, if you like, try to disestablish the Church of Wales; and if you succeed, in my opinion—though I sympathize with the object as a matter of abstract principle—nobody will be one penny the better for it."<sup>2</sup> That question which he had

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, June 14, Oct. 17, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 1894. The remainder of the paragraph is of interest: "You may, as I have said, if you like, try to disestablish the

desired to bring within the realm of practical politics in 1877 and again in 1885, is now merely mentioned as a matter of abstract principle. A letter from his secretary to the editor of the *Aberystwyth Observer* in January, 1895, only a few months before the general election, is written in a somewhat different vein, and could not have been as pleasing to his Conservative allies. "Disestablishment in Wales must come," he wrote, "and the only question is whether it shall be accompanied by a just treatment of the Church in regard to its funds." He then appealed to Churchmen that they should urge their leaders to devote themselves to that part of the subject, since the Unionist party was then in a position to secure an equitable settlement.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks after he had expressed these opinions, Asquith reintroduced his bill of the preceding session for the separation of Church and State in Wales. At the second reading of the measure in April, Chamberlain availed himself of the liberty of action accorded him by the leaders of the Conservative party and again voted with the Liberationists.<sup>2</sup>

The question of Scottish disestablishment was also reopened for discussion during the period of the Liberal regime in the 'nineties. When Lord Rosebery placed his views before the electors of Edinburgh in March, 1894, Chamberlain

Welsh Church, or you may on the other hand, try to become the owners of your own houses. You may attempt to pass an Irish Land Bill, or you may attempt to get old age pensions for yourselves. You may try to put down drinking and to prevent any man having a glass of beer or you may try with me to prevent drunkenness and to restrict the vice of drinking. Lastly, you may enter into a campaign which will last as long as Lord Rosebery himself has warned you, for years, and it may be for generations, or you may prefer what I believe to be a wiser course—you may enter on a campaign against want and misery, and you may try to add something to the sum of human happiness."

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 4, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 30 (1895), p. 1487-1495; *Parliamentary Record*, 1895, p. 128.

also found it advisable a few days later to define his position on this controversial issue. At this time he endorsed unqualifiedly the pronouncement of Gladstone nine years earlier—that the decision on the question must be the decision of the Scottish people. Regarding the method by which this decision should be arrived at, he likewise agreed with Gladstone who in an address in 1879 had insisted that the decision of the majority of the Scottish members in the House of Commons would not be acceptable since their election had been based on the general issues of their respective parties. To be conclusive, the decision should be taken under circumstances which could not possibly be denied. Comparing his remarks on this occasion with those expressed in an address at Glasgow in September, 1885, one concludes that he was in closer allegiance with his former chief on this phase of politics in 1894 than he had been in the days of the unauthorized programme. Whereas in 1885, he restlessly chafed at the willingness of party leaders to delay the issue, nine years later he too found it desirable to await the “deliberate and unmistakable decision of the Scottish people.”<sup>1</sup>

With the accession of the Conservatives to power in 1895, disestablishment in England, Scotland and Wales as a question of practical politics was indefinitely postponed. The new Colonial Minister quite advisedly made no effort to solve a problem for which he could expect to receive no support from his colleagues. For him, disestablishment as a political issue was dead. When a bill for the disestablishment of the Church in England and Wales was introduced in 1897, he took no part in the debate, nor does his name appear in the division list. He followed the same course in relation to a later bill in 1902 which applied only to Wales.<sup>2</sup> Yet one is inclined to feel that the cherished ambition of an earlier day

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Mar. 19 and 23, 1895. See *supra*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 46 (1897), p. 62; vol. 102 (1902), p. 418.



was not forgotten. In a debate on the Bishoprics of Southwark and Birmingham Bill in 1904, he reasserted his conviction of the Radical days: "I am not only a Nonconformist, but I am myself, and always have been, in favour of the policy of disestablishment. I have thought and said that the adoption of that policy would be a relief to the Church of England, that it would increase its spiritual influence, and that it would save it from attacks which are now made upon its holding an exceptional and privileged position."<sup>1</sup>

For a fair understanding of the disestablishment policy of this Nonconformist statesman whose parliamentary career covered a period of thirty years, the varying changes in his political environment and the outlook of the public as a whole on this controversial problem must not be ignored. It was during the 'seventies that the educational controversy accompanied with its bitter religious strife was at its height; moreover, it was in Chamberlain's home city in which were located the headquarters of the National Education League and the Central Nonconformist Committee, that the agitation was keenest. Under such conditions, moderation could not be expected from a Nonconformist "born and bred in dissent." Entrance into Parliament transferred him from the atmosphere of a Nonconformist community to a legislative assembly consisting of representatives of all shades of religious faith. Even within his own party, the prevailing voice was not in accord with his cry for the abolition of ecclesiastical supremacy. New problems came to demand his attention and absorb his energies. When in 1885 he would have renewed the agitation, he found it necessary to submit to the Liberal leader. Then Home Rule brought separation from most of those with whom he might have cooperated in establishing a free church; it also brought association with a party which had ever stood firm in defense of the Church

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 4th ser., vol. 134 (1904), p. 412.

of England. It was inevitable that many Nonconformist friends should have been disappointed at the waning enthusiasm of one to whom they had looked as their most zealous champion; it is not surprising, however, that there should have been submission to the wishes of the majority of the Tory party, since he considered it imperative to maintain the alliance for the preservation of the Union.

In addition, he could not have been immune to the changing sentiment in all political ranks. The files of the *Liberator* during the 'seventies reveal the Liberationist Society in a most flourishing condition, "the stage of discussion had come", that of settlement was believed to be near. Nonconformist feeling rose high against the Church whose history showed that "the vast mass of the clergy had always resisted every attempt to extend the limits of freedom, and had opposed every social and political reform."<sup>1</sup> The progressive development of the Church of England, affected in some degree no doubt by Chamberlain's programme of social reform, could not fail to moderate the hostility of its former foes. To many others besides Chamberlain the disestablishment of the Church of England passed out of the realm of practical politics and became a principle of abstract theory. The Liberationist party at the opening of the twentieth century had become a mere shadow of its former self. The cause of Welsh disestablishment to be sure was not deserted by the Liberal party, but its final accomplishment was not brought about until after Chamberlain's eventful life was ended. Whatever opinion may be expressed of his utterances at various times or his failure to further the cause of disestablishment, it is generally agreed that his convictions as a dissenter were abiding.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 179-184.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHAMBERLAIN AND LAND REFORM

DURING the latter part of the 'sixties when Chamberlain was beginning to participate in the municipal politics of Birmingham, John Stuart Mill was opening the eyes of many of his countrymen to the existence of a serious land problem. Whereas, in France, the great Revolution had tended to break up the large estates, the tendency in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been toward an increase in enclosures, with the result that the large estates had supplanted to an astonishing degree the small holdings and communal proprietorships of the seventeenth century. Under the presidency of Mill, the Land Tenure Reform Association was organized in 1870 for the purpose of breaking down this monopoly of the land. The great economist, who was interested likewise in the Irish land situation, sought to arouse the English people to a consciousness that the English tenant as well as the Irish, was the victim of exceedingly unfair treatment. As a result of this criticism, Lord Derby requested in 1872 that a government survey of the ownership of the land be made. This Report, which was issued two years later, was necessarily incomplete, on account of opposition from the landlords; however, it showed that nearly one-half of the enclosed land of England and Wales was held by 2250 persons. Co-existent with this situation were other conditions which produced unrest. The development of the large estates had not been attended by an increase in production but by an actual decrease of the produce of the soil. To add to the

seriousness of the situation, the lessened demand for labourers on the large estates and the increased demand for their services in the rapidly growing industrial centers was resulting in a gradual depopulation of the rural districts. The tenant who remained on the soil found himself the victim of many an injustice; he was liable to unjust eviction from his land; he was inadequately compensated for the improvements he had made; and his position was aggravated by the game laws which protected the landlord in his control and enjoyment of thousands of acres of waste land given over to deer parks. The agricultural labourer found himself in an even worse condition; his home was little more than a hovel; his wages were insufficient to meet the needs of his family; and his lack of political privileges deprived him of all opportunity to alleviate his unfortunate condition.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain, with his ready sympathy for any class suffering unjust treatment, did not fail to respond to the agitation for a new order of things. Though he lived all his life in industrial communities, his knowledge of the rural problem was more than a superficial one. From the days of his early municipal activities, Jesse Collings, a man descended from the soil, had been one of his closest friends. As co-workers, they laboured in the city of Birmingham for the increased well-being of those whom they served; later as parliamentary representatives, they gave their best energies to the field of imperial activity. During Collings' entire parliamentary career, his first interest was land reform, and

<sup>1</sup> *Wisconsin University Bulletin*, vol. i (1904-1906), *loc. cit.*, Taylor, Henry C, "Decline of Landowning Farmers in England" (Madison, Wisconsin, 1906), pp. 8-61; Courtney, W. L., *Life of John Stuart Mill* (London, 1889), p. 163; Mill, John Stuart, *Dissertations and Discussions* (New York, 1875), vol. v, pp. 225-294; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1874, vol. 72; *The Radical Programme*, pp. 114-155; Alden, Percy, *Democratic England* (New York, 1912), pp. 244, 245; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. i, p. 100.

his influence was significant in directing his colleague's attention to the land situation and in shaping his programme for the solution of the problem.<sup>1</sup> In company with this friend, Chamberlain visited various districts of England and Scotland in an effort to understand the actual conditions existing. Mr. J. A. Spender has recalled a tour of inspection through the poorest districts of Wiltshire in their company when Chamberlain with enthusiasm and jest talked with the labourers and small farmers. Among other tours is recorded a trip through the highlands and islands of Scotland in 1886 when the two friends made a first-hand investigation of the injustices suffered by the crofters.<sup>2</sup>

Not only did his companionship with Collings enlarge his vision in sensing the injustice of the land situation, but his political association with the parliamentary representatives of Birmingham also aided in developing an unsympathetic attitude toward the existing power of the English landlords. George Dixon, his predecessor in Parliament, looked with disfavour on the landed interest which he believed to be in almost exclusive control of the government of the country; John Bright, the honoured representative of the Midland city for thirty years, had never shown any great respect for the rights of the landlord class, as was clearly evidenced in the anti-corn law campaign.<sup>3</sup> Like Bright, too, Chamberlain was a manufacturer and this fact added another im-

<sup>1</sup> Collings, Jesse and Green, John L., *The Life of the Right Hon. Jesse Collings* (London, 1920), p. viii. Collings wrote two books on the land question—*Land Reform* (London, 1906) and *The Colonization of Rural Britain*, 2 vols. (London, 1916).

<sup>2</sup> Milner and Others, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, *loc. cit.*, Spender, J. A., "Mr. Chamberlain as a Radical," p. 93; Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 193, 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, Sept. 18, 1868; Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*, pp. 93, 125, 142. The first National Congress of the Agricultural Labourers for the organization of a national union in April, 1872, was held under the presidency of Mr. Dixon. Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 115, 116.

portant element in developing a critical attitude toward the large landowner. As a manufacturer, he had had little association with the landed aristocracy, and consequently no friendly feeling of cooperation or support existed. Just as the landed interest had been alive to the evils of the factory system and had sought to remedy them, so the manufacturer was prone to be keenly conscious of the social ills which had their roots in the extensive control of the landed nobility. He could look with sympathetic eyes on the pitiable state of the labourer and small farmer and view with concern the ever-increasing migration of the labourers to the town.

Early in the 'seventies, Chamberlain began to cooperate with the forces which had been organized by Mill for agrarian reform. At a public meeting held in connexion with the Land Tenure Reform Association in February, 1872, he seconded a resolution to the effect that the law of land tenure required alteration. Since he realized the dependence of social progress upon parliamentary reform, he spoke first of the redistribution of political power so as to give proper representation to the opinions of great towns like Birmingham, and to the agricultural labourers, that they might have some voice in the laws which so vitally concerned them. He added that if he were to write the heading of the next chapter of the Liberal programme, he would write "Free land, free schools, and free church". In this speech, however, Chamberlain did not make an attack upon the landlords as a class; he was in harmony with the crusade of the association, directed as it was against the laws, and not the men who profited by them. He felt that this was proper and fortunate because the landlords, as a class, were no worse than any other class.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time that the Land Tenure Reform Associa-

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Feb. 20, 1872. Cf. Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

tion was carrying out its active programme, attention was focused upon one specific phase of the agrarian problem—the plight of the agricultural labourer. In Warwickshire, the labourers, aroused by their distressing condition, began to combine in their own defense. The movement which originated in March, 1872, under the efficient leadership of Joseph Arch, rapidly spread throughout the district and to many other counties, and finally resulted in the formation of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. In the strikes which were inaugurated, the common demands made by the unions were the concession of a higher wage and the recognition of their right to combine.<sup>1</sup> As a manufacturer, Chamberlain had always sanctioned the right of his employees to combine in their own behalf; he was entirely consistent in his position when he freely admitted the right of the agricultural labourers to exercise the same privilege; and furthermore, he became, in cooperation with his fellow citizen, Jesse Collings, one of their strongest supporters in the strenuous contest which ensued between labourer and farmer.<sup>2</sup> In a speech at Sheffield in September, 1873, he fearlessly upheld their cause when he declared:

The agricultural labourers in this country are the worst paid, the worst clothed, and the worst housed peasantry in the civilized world. . . . And what have the upper classes done for these men? . . . How has their condition been improved by resting

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, vol. 45 (1872), pp. 359, 389, 421, 486.

<sup>2</sup> Collings cooperated with Arch in the formation of the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union and of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union which almost immediately grew out of it. When a Finance Committee of the Warwickshire Union was appointed, he was one of the four members. From 1872 to 1880 he gave liberally of his time at committee meetings of the National Union and also supported the movement by speeches before the public. After entrance into Parliament, he became an ardent spokesman of the Union and its interests. Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-121.

entirely upon the legislation of another class? I thank God that at last they have been driven by terrible wrong to combine in their own defense. They have done more in one twelve-month by organization for themselves than all other classes of the country have done for them in thirty years of previous legislation.<sup>1</sup>

The agitation aroused by the demands of this group of society, now possessed with a vital class consciousness, finally resulted in 1874 in a lock-out of the farm labourers in several counties of England. Here again Chamberlain, who was at this time Mayor of Birmingham, stood firmly behind them. At a meeting of protest convened by the Birmingham Trades Council, the Mayor presided and vigorously defended the labourers in their rights. He protested against the action of the farmers who were resisting the labourers' demands for higher wages; against the condition of the homes where the tillers of the soil were obliged to live; against the "pernicious land laws" which were so direly in need of reform. A few days later he upheld their claims before the local Liberal Association and appealed for donations in behalf of the National Union of Agricultural Labourers. His own contribution of £50 was tangible evidence of a real desire to sustain them in their efforts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, pp. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, April 16 and 22, 1874. The lock-out first developed in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire in March, 1874, when in reply to the labourers' demand that wages be raised from 13s. a week to 14s. the farmers formed themselves into a strict Trades Union and carried a resolution to lockout all labourers who were Union men and never to employ them again. The lock-out later spread to Berkshire and Lincolnshire. In the latter county, the farmers and labourers came to an agreement the last of May, the farmers recognizing the Unions and the labourers agreeing, with the consent of their organization, to give a month's notice of any claim for more wages. The farmers of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk held out against the labourers with such stubbornness that the strike was continued until the last of July. By that time the Union funds were



His support of the agricultural labourer and other victims of the English land system became national in its scope when his views were published in the *Fortnightly Review* of October, 1874. He admitted that theoretically the reform of the representation was the most pressing of all political questions; yet he believed that the greatest immediate advantages would undoubtedly come from the recasting of the land system. He indicated that such a remodeling would require the concession of an absolute tenant right to the English farmer; the abolition or reform of the game laws; the restriction of the rights of entail and settlement within the narrowest limits; and some provision for securing to small cultivators more frequent opportunities of proprietorship. Gladstone he designated as the great statesman capable of carrying these proposals into legislation, but if he were unable or unwilling to accept the leadership, Chamberlain would favour their postponement rather than to entrust such a responsibility to a "mere scheming politician" such as he believed Forster to be.<sup>1</sup> Gladstone was not inclined to accept the suggestion; consequently land reform did not appear on the "next page of the Liberal programme".

During the remaining years of Chamberlain's mayoralty, his main energies were engaged in carrying through his great municipal projects. The attention which he gave to national affairs was largely concentrated on the amendment of the Education Act of 1870 and the cause of disestablishment which he believed was then ripe for settlement; the

nearing exhaustion and the committees were obliged to withdraw the allowance paid to men locked out or on strike. Even so, some good had been accomplished, as during the period of strike, the average rate of wages was increased 2s. a week. *Spectator*, vol. 47 (1874), pp. 421, 581, 678, 679, 742, 966.

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 22 (1874), p. 419. See also *ibid.*, vol. 20 (1873), pp. 296, 297.

year following his entrance into Parliament, however, he again reverted to the problem of the land and stated that in his opinion the time had come when the scope of the landowner's duties might be somewhat enlarged and the extent of his rights somewhat curtailed. If the existing conditions of land tenure could be shown to be unfavourable to production from the soil, it appeared to him that Parliament had precisely similar grounds for interference as in the case of a great landowner wilfully throwing his land into waste. The first thing which he would require of the landowners was that they join in cheapening the transfer of land in order that more land might be brought into the market.<sup>1</sup> The following year in debate on the County Government Bill in the House of Commons, he did not hesitate to protest against the proposal of the Government to withhold from the agricultural labourer his rightful share in local government. He considered that any measure which aimed at a permanent and satisfactory solution of the local government problem should be based on household franchise. The difficulty of the situation was quite apparent to Chamberlain; whereas, "the interests of the farmers and the magistrates, and the rights of property had numerous and eloquent representatives to defend their position", the agricultural labourer had no representative in the House. Accordingly, throughout the whole of the debate on the bill, the welfare of the labourer had been ignored.<sup>2</sup> Quite naturally his advanced ideas did not find acceptance in the House, yet his position made clear to the rural workers the loyalty of a friend who in Parliament as well as out was willing to speak in their behalf. In November, 1879, he again showed that he was mindful of their interest when he specified the extension of the franchise and the reform of the land laws

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Nov. 8, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 238 (1878), pp. 908-915.

as two great questions which ought to be supported by the Liberals in the approaching election.<sup>1</sup>

The Liberal Cabinet of 1880 in which the Whig element predominated was not disposed to join with Chamberlain in his enthusiasm for domestic reform, and as the one representative of the Radicals in the Government he had no reason to expect that any immediate attention would be devoted to English land reform. The more alarming situation in Ireland in 1880 and 1881 was sufficient to focus the efforts of the Prime Minister upon the passage of the Irish Land Act of 1881. Chamberlain was by no means unmindful of the need of this reform, yet he was not likely to forget the existence of similar ills which lay even nearer at hand. Besides, his position at the Board of Trade involved certain connexions with the agricultural interests.<sup>2</sup> English agriculture as a vital part of British trade engaged his attention at various times. In the debate on the negotiation of a French treaty which would establish limited reciprocity in trade between the two countries, he had occasion to speak of the existing agricultural depression. His explanation of the situation does not, as one might expect, contain any reference to the agrarian ills which he had lamented during the 'seventies. One wonders if the acquisition of office had not temporarily lessened his radicalism. He said at that time:

I admit that the state of agriculture has been for some time such as to cause all of us the greatest concern. I believe Mr. Caird has estimated that the difference in production from agriculture during the past three years, as compared with the normal average, has been equivalent to a loss of £150,000,000 sterling. . . . But this is not a question of Protection or Free Trade;

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Nov. 12, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> The collection of agricultural statistics was assigned to the Board of Trade. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 262 (1881), p. 5.

and the state of things we deplore arises mainly from the absence of sun and the unfavourable seasons of the last four or five years.<sup>1</sup>

Though he was for many years to hold firm to his conviction that protection did not offer the solution of the problem, yet he was not long content to leave the revival of agriculture dependent upon an uncertain improvement in the weather.

A meagre beginning in the fulfillment of Chamberlain's proposals for agrarian reform was made in the Allotments Extension Act of 1882. It provided that all charity lands in the country not required for educational purposes should be offered by their trustees as allotments to the labourers and to others in the parishes in which they were situated. The measure became law through the efforts of Jesse Collings, but it received the sanction of his loyal friend and colleague. About a quarter of a million acres of charity land came within its scope; attempts were made to let land in plots of less than an acre at a fair agricultural rent to the poor labourers.<sup>2</sup> The passage of the measure gave rise to the formation of the Allotments Extension Association,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 3rd ser., vol. 264 (1881), pp. 1791, 1792. It must be recognized that there was justification for Chamberlain's reference to the weather. Brodrick writes of this period of agricultural depression: "The agricultural distress of the year 1879-1880 will long be memorable in the economic records of the country, and may probably be remembered as marking a crisis in the history of the English Land System. Its most obvious and principal cause was the occurrence of several bad seasons in succession, culminating in the coldest, wettest and least genial spring and summer that has been known within living memory." One would expect, nevertheless, that Chamberlain might mention certain other factors which the land reformers believed to be partly responsible for the very serious agricultural situation. Brodrick, George C., *English Land and English Landlords* (London and New York, 1881), p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> 45 and 46 Vict., c. 80; Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 *et seq.*, 223-225. Compare the purpose of the Act with the programme of the Land Tenure Reform Association, article vii, in Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

which received Chamberlain's cooperation. Since he could not be present at the meeting held for the organization of the association, he sent the following letter:

Dec. 3, 1883.—The Allotments Act which was passed through Mr. Jesse Collings' exertions, is one of the most valuable measures which have received the Royal Assent during the present Parliament. It offers to agricultural labourers throughout the country the hope of something more than a bare weekly wage, and the opportunity of cultivating a little land for their own advantage. The experience gained will be most valuable, and will throw light on the still more important subject of the expediency of small proprietorships, in a considerable extension of which many people see the ultimate solution of the land question.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the results anticipated from the enactment of the law were not realized; it proved almost ineffective due to the failure of the Charity Commissioners, in a large majority of cases, to require trustees of land to let property in their control in accordance with the provisions of the measure. Collings received able support from his colleague in protesting against the attitude of the Commissioners. But regardless of its failure, at least one noteworthy advance was accomplished by the Act, in that for the first time the labourer was given a legal right in land, though this right did not extend beyond the privilege of renting it.<sup>2</sup>

Another agrarian measure, the Agricultural Holdings Act, in behalf of the tenant farmer, was passed in the session of 'eighty-three. Chamberlain's exact connexion with this legislation it is impossible to state, but Sir Charles Dilke has contributed information to the effect that his colleague had

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Dec. 8, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-225; Collings, *Colonization of Rural Britain*, vol. ii, p. 324; *Spectator*, vol. 57 (1884), p. 1572, vol. 58 (1885), p. 41.

urged a Tenant Rights Bill for England. Such a project, he confided to Sir Charles, "would be a great stroke of business. Without it" they would "lose the farmers for a certainty". The two Radical Cabinet members concurred in this opinion, and a moderate measure providing that a tenant should at the termination of his tenancy receive compensation from his landlord for certain improvements made on his holdings was enacted into law.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain was at this time engaged in carrying through his Bankruptcy Bill, and took no part in the debate on the Agricultural Holdings Bill.

Though Gladstone's Government did not place any important legislation for British land reform on the statute books, it should be given the credit for enacting into law the Representation of the People Bill in 1884, whereby through the extension of the franchise to the agricultural labourer, he was provided with an instrument which was considered indispensable in the furtherance of his rights. Chamberlain was foremost among those who realized the possibilities dependent upon this legislation and the injustice which the labourer had borne due to his lack of opportunity to defend himself. When during the progress of the measure before the House, it was urged that the Bill, if passed, would annihilate the agricultural interests, he fearlessly declared that in his opinion, the greatest of agricultural interests were the interests of the men who tilled the soil. Those were the interests which he believed should be cared for, and those were the interests which would be advanced by the Bill. Then followed one of the most sensational attacks upon the wrongs which had been committed against this neglected class:

<sup>1</sup> 46 and 47 Vict., c. 61, Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 518. Dilke entered the Cabinet as President of the Local Government Board in December, 1882. *Ibid.*, p. 495.

What has happened in consequence of the agricultural labourers not having a voice in this House? They have been robbed of their land. . . . They have been robbed of their rights in the commons. They have been robbed of their open spaces—I do not say intentionally, with any desire on the part of this House or of those who were answerable for those proceedings to injure them, but in ignorance of their interests and rights, for which, unfortunately, they had no spokesman in this House. And, Sir, it may be said, that these proceedings, which I have characterized in language not a whit too strong, have now come to an end. Not a bit of it; they are going on still. The agricultural labourers are still being robbed. . . . There is no protection against the steady absorption that is continually going on of open spaces which belong to the people, but which are gradually being included in the estates of the landowners.<sup>1</sup>

The extension of the franchise, therefore, extended to the labourer the opportunity to alleviate to some extent the ills to which he had been subject.

Although Gladstone's Government was comparatively indifferent to the advancement of agrarian reform in England, various forces outside of Parliament were furthering the agitation which had been given such great impetus during the 'seventies by the Land Tenure Reform Association and the National Union of Agricultural Labourers. The agricultural depression which had set in during the latter half

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 286 (1884), pp. 955, 956. Cf. Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 241, 246-248, 272. The following words by Mill are of especial interest in this connexion. "...I confess that I cannot speak of the existing practice of dividing the common lands among the landlords by any gentler name than robbery—robbery of the poor. It will, of course, be said that people cannot be robbed of what is not theirs, and that the commons are not the legal property of the poor. Certainly not; our masters have taken care that the poor shall not acquire property by custom, as all other classes have done. But if the commons are not the property of the poor, they are just as little the property of those who take them." *Ibid.*, p. 272.

of the decade served to strengthen the voices calling for the inauguration of a new epoch in behalf of the oppressed labourers of the soil. In 1879, Henry George had published his *Progress and Poverty*, in which he insisted on the solution of the land problem as the key to all other problems. Three years later Alfred Russell Wallace gave his answer to the question in his *Land Nationalization*. That Chamberlain was among those who sensed the response of the masses to such messages is shown in the following letter to Lady Dorothy Nevill.

Jan. 4th., 1883.—. . . Have you read two books lately published—*Progress and Poverty* by H. George, and *Land Nationalization* by A. Walton [*sic*]? They come to the same conclusion, “l’ennemi c’est le propriétaire” and they advocate the same remedy, namely confiscation of property in land. I am told these books are being eagerly read by the working classes in London and that the feeling in favour of drastic measures is growing. In all seriousness, if I were a large landowner I should be uneasy. They are so few and the landless are so many. There is only one way of giving security to this kind of property and that is to multiply the owners of it. Peasant proprietorship in some form or other and on a large scale, is the antidote to the doctrines of confiscation which are now gaining converts.<sup>1</sup>

Though he branded the proposals of Henry George as “doctrines of confiscation”, yet his own remarks on the

<sup>1</sup> Nevill, Lady Dorothy, *Under Five Reigns* (New York, 1910), pp. 206, 207. In a *Fortnightly* article contributed by Chamberlain on labourers’ and artisans’ dwellings, he wrote: “The wide circulation of such books as the *Progress and Poverty* of Mr. Henry George, and the acceptance which his proposals have found among the working classes, are facts full of significance and warning. If something be not done quickly to meet the growing necessities of the case we may live to see theories as wild and unjust as those suggested by the American economist adopted as the creed of no inconsiderable portion of the electorate.” *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 40 (1883), p. 762.



situation of the land were received by many a landlord of the country with a feeling of considerable uneasiness. In a discussion of the Irish land difficulties, he directed his somewhat caustic comments at Lord Salisbury, his later chief in a Unionist Government:

I say that in this matter as in so many others, Lord Salisbury constitutes himself the spokesman of a class—of the class to which he himself belongs—“who toil not, neither do they spin”—whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated in grants made long ago, for such services as courtiers render kings—and have since grown or increased while their owners slept, by the levy of an unearned share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country of which they form a part.<sup>1</sup>

Closely related to this rather derogatory statement was his interpretation several months later of John Stuart Mill's suggestion with regard to what he called unearned increment, the improved value which did not come from any expenditure on the part of the landlord—that that improvement was no just property of the landlord and might fairly be appropriated by the State. John Bright had referred to Mill's theory in a speech at Birmingham and had designated the proposition as so impracticable that he considered a discussion of the question quite unnecessary. Of a different mind, however, was the junior member from Birmingham, who regretted that his friend looked upon Mill's proposals in such a light. Chamberlain confessed that he had heretofore carefully avoided defining in any way his opinions on the subject since he had observed that “if anyone publicly refers to the unearned increment, thereupon every Tory editor, politician and public speaker loses his senses, loses those senses with which Providence has blessed Conserva-

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 41.

tives". On this occasion, however, he ventured upon an interpretation as to what the economist meant in the use of the term. He believed that Mill thought and taught that the increase in property which comes in some cases without any effort on the part of the owner, and which is due to the industry of others, was an increase so different from what is ordinarily understood by the produce of exertion, of trade, of commerce, that greater obligations might fairly be imposed upon it.<sup>1</sup> A perusal of Mill's speeches dealing with the subject of unearned increment does not give much credence to Chamberlain's very conservative interpretation, but the fact that he dared to discuss such a socialistic issue gave an appearance of extreme radicalism.

Opinions so favourable to the distressed tiller of the soil, so unfavourable to the wealthy landowner, could not fail to win the labourer to the Radical side. At a meeting of the National Union of Agricultural Labourers in November, a resolution of sympathy and confidence was sent to their foremost spokesman.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain's sympathies in behalf of this class were further strengthened by the opposition of the Lords to the Representation of the People Bill of 1884, a measure which would extend to the labourer the exercise of the long-denied franchise. When at length a compromise was reached between Gladstone and the Lords, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Jan. 31, 1884. Cf. with Chamberlain's interpretation the following statement by Mill: "Landed property is felt, even by those most tenacious of its rights, to be a different thing from other property; and where the bulk of the community have been disinherited of their share of it, and it has become the inclusive attribute of a small minority, men have generally tried to reconcile it, at least in theory, to their sense of justice, by endeavouring to attach duties to it, and erecting it into a sort of magistracy, either moral or legal." Mill, J. S., *Principles of Political Economy* (London and New York, 1920), p. 233. Regarding his more radical views on unearned increment during the 'seventies, see Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. 5, pp. 230-232, 250-252, 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Nov. 19, 1884.

enfranchisement of two millions of the labouring class was completed, the President of the Board of Trade predicted a new era of domestic legislation from the reformed House which would meet in Westminster. His views on the subject he set forth in the famous "Ransom" speech at Birmingham on January 5, 1885. As one means of promoting "the greatest happiness of the masses of the people" he proposed that a new interpretation be given to the rights of property, but unfortunately the interpretation which he had to offer was based on the Social Contract theory long before exploded. He thus stated the situation to his local admirers:

If you go back to the early history of our social system, you will find that when our social arrangements began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with natural rights,<sup>1</sup> with a right in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all those rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them; some have been destroyed by fraud; and some have been acquired by violence. Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and customs, it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom that it might be very difficult and perhaps impossible to reverse it. But then I ask, what ransom will property pay for the security which

<sup>1</sup>In a speech at Glasgow, September 15, 1885, Chamberlain again referred to the question of natural rights. He said in part: "Let us put the question of rights on one side, although I could quote in support of it such authorities as Mr. John Stuart Mill, and also a certain document which made a good deal of stir in its time, and which was known as the Declaration of American Independence; instead of rights let us say that men are born into this world with claims-claims upon the generosity, upon the justice of society, and that those claims ought to have the authority and sanction of law." *Lucy, op. cit.*, p. 200.

it enjoys? What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognized?<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that no words of the Radical statesman ever brought forth such comment as this ransom theory, a doctrine subject to such varying interpretations. In fact, the interpretations of the speaker himself at various periods of his career are interesting. On January 14, came a restatement of the doctrine in different form when he asked: "What insurance will wealth find it to its advantage to provide against the risks to which it is undoubtedly subject? If the rich want their rights to be respected as they ought to be, they are bound in turn to respect the rights of their less fortunate brethren." He hastens to explain, however, that it is not his intention to bring forward views which, as some thought, would lead straight to Communism. To his mind it was not possible or expedient to bring everything down to one dead level. In Boyd's collection of Chamberlain's speeches, a much later interpretation of this widely discussed doctrine is given. After listening to his son, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, read from Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* the following passages: *Les revenus de l'État sont une portion que chaque citoyen donne de son bien pour avoir la sûreté de l'autre*, Chamberlain said, "That is my doctrine of ransom".<sup>2</sup> Such vague statements of theory were productive of wild enthusiasm, violent denunciation, and unlimited discussion.

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 137. Note Chamberlain's acceptance of private ownership of land. The controversy which developed from this speech caused him to justify the statements he had made. In a speech at Evesham, November 16, 1885, Chamberlain quoted J. S. Mill in support of his position on enclosures, referring to him as the greatest of modern political economists, also as a man "who was wont to measure his words and who never said anything he was not able to prove." The passage quoted is given in footnote 1, p. 209. *Times*, Nov. 17, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 142.

The *Spectator* was inclined to view Chamberlain's programme as a wise and moderate one, though it suggested that he make an appeal to the new democracy that it should discharge its duties even more punctiliously than it would claim its rights. Approval less esteemed by the Radical leader came from Henry George who called upon an audience of working men to follow the Cabinet Minister who had the courage to raise the standard of natural right. In fact, so closely were the positions of Chamberlain and George identified in the minds of some people, that one critic declared that Chamberlain had secured the services of an American demagogue to aid his outrageous attacks upon land and property. Such a charge was naturally repudiated by the author of the ransom theory who explained that his chief object of interest—the promotion of peasant proprietorships—was utterly inconsistent with George's proposition.<sup>1</sup>

An actual examination of Chamberlain's concrete proposals, apart from any vague expression of theory, shows that he was quite right—his programme of land reform bore no resemblance to that of the Single-taxer. His speeches on the well-known unauthorized programme of 1885 reveal a real appreciation of the agrarian problem, though the earlier speeches do not offer a definite programme for its solution. In the speech at Ipswich in January, he seemed to feel that he was standing on neutral ground when he remarked that he took it for granted that all Liberals would be willing to complete the programme of Cobden and Bright, and to have free trade in land. But the fulfillment of this reform he did not consider sufficiently extensive to solve the grievous condition of agriculture in England and Scotland; nor did he believe that the remedy

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, vol. 58 (1885), pp. 75-77; *Times*, Feb. 5 and 7, 1885.

was to be found in protection. To the demands of the crofters—the small tenants of Scotland—that the Irish Land Act be applied to their holdings, he gave a sympathetic hearing; nor did he regard with alarm the extension of the principle to other lands than the very smallest holdings. He admitted that he was not afraid of the Three F's in England, Scotland and Ireland. To such a proposal he found the main obstacle in the farmers themselves who on so many occasions played into the hands of the landlords and gave their support to propositions which were of no value to themselves. Furthermore, their dependence upon the landlords due to their insufficiency of capital for the necessary improvements, would mean that fixity of tenure would not be of the slightest value to the farmer. This statement indicated that Chamberlain realized to a certain degree that the position of the tenant in England was quite different from that of the tenant in Ireland and that the system of dual ownership which had met with fair success in the latter country was not entirely adaptable to the situation at home. With no proposed solution for this phase of the problem, he then turned to the question of increasing the production of dairy and garden products which were being largely imported into the country. Such cultivation could only prosper when in the hands of small cultivators. "And so," he concludes, "we come back to what is, after all, the most urgent and pressing need of all—that we shall, as far as may be, go back to the old system and reestablish the peasants and yeomen who were one of the most prosperous, and most independent, and the most comfortable of all classes in the community." Just how this was to be accomplished Chamberlain did not attempt to explain; he only urged the necessity for legislation which would bring the fulfillment of such a purpose, and emphatically gave his approval to the Allotments Act upheld by his friend Jesse

Collings.<sup>1</sup> At a later date he commended the successful experiment of Lord Toller-mache in Cheshire, who had divided his estate into small farms of five to fifteen acres, had erected appropriate buildings and residences, and in addition had built excellent cottages for every labourer on the estate. In reply to the argument that every landlord did not have the capital to make such an experiment, he contended that it was only right that in such cases the landlord should give place to those who had sufficient funds. In this connexion he was anxious to call in the local authorities in every district, to give them authority to take land at its fair value, and incur the necessary expenditure.<sup>2</sup>

When greater freedom of action was made possible for the Liberal party with the accession of the Conservatives to power in June, 1885, Chamberlain proceeded to emphasize land reform as one of the most pressing needs of the country. In referring to that most important document of radical propaganda, *The Radical Programme*, he designated the question of the land as the most important of its proposals.<sup>3</sup> From the time of its appearance, his own programme of land reform was concerned with definite phases of the problem. His numerous speeches suggest that he considered the problem, first, in relation to the labourer and small farmer; second, in relation to the farmer in possession of quite extensive acres. For the benefit of all concerned he advocated not only free trade in land, but also a revision of the taxation upon land. He sanctioned a recent proposal of the Government in favour of the equalization of death duties

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-149.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 189; *The Radical Programme*, chapter v. Agricultural reform in this chapter is considered almost entirely in relation to the labourer. The reforms proposed in his behalf are local government, free education, better housing, allotments, small holdings and restitution of lands illegally obtained.

and in addition, he proposed the taxation of all unoccupied and sporting land at its full value. To that extent, at all events, he would "invade the sanctity of landed property". On a later occasion his personal approval was also given to a proposal made by Sir Kenneth Mackenzie that if the best authorities were agreed that the vast acres of deer forests were not advantageous to the country, they should be subjected to special taxes intended to discourage their extension. In comparison with the emphasis which Chamberlain placed upon other features of his agrarian programme, one does not feel that he attached primary importance to a readjustment of taxation in relation to the land. He also indicated a desire to remedy by other means the evils attendant upon the establishment of private ownership. When the property of the community had been wrongfully appropriated, when endowments had been diverted to improper uses, when enclosures had been illegally made, he insisted that restitution should be made; yet he offered no suggestion as to just how such a difficult proceeding should be carried out.<sup>1</sup>

But Chamberlain did offer a very definite scheme whereby the agricultural labourers might become the occupiers of allotments and small holdings. He proposed that the powers of the local authorities should be so extended as to enable them to obtain land for all public purposes at its fair value, without paying an extortionate price to the landowner "for reentering on what was the original possession of the whole community". These local authorities, under proper conditions, should have power to let land for labourers' allotments, for artisans' dwellings and for small holdings. According to his plan, the community would reserve its control over the land obtained, but the tenants should have entire security as long as they fulfilled the conditions of their hold-

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, pp. 171, 172, 213.



ings. Compulsory sale at fair market value Chamberlain emphasized as an essential feature of the programme. He refused to recognize altogether the right of refusing land for public purposes as among the sacred rights of property.<sup>1</sup>

For the improvement of the position of the farmer, his only specific remedy continued to be the Three F's, a programme which he believed did not give much promise of fulfillment due to the position of the farmer himself; on various occasions, Chamberlain repeated that if the farmer did not care about free rent or free sale, he would not be likely to get it. Not alone the attitude of the farmers, but also the division of opinion in the Liberal party on the subject, did not encourage him to press for this application of the Irish Land Act to either England or Scotland.<sup>2</sup> The application of the Three F's to England, therefore, may be eliminated entirely as a vital part of Chamberlain's programme.

In the final analysis, one concludes from a review of his speeches that the keynote of Chamberlain's whole land policy was the development of a system of allotments and small holdings by means of compulsory expropriation of the land. This opinion is further confirmed by Gladstone's account of Chamberlain's demands on behalf of the Radicals in view of the formation of a future Liberal Ministry. One of the three points insisted upon by the younger statesman was that power be given to local authorities to take land for allotments and kindred purposes. The election manifesto later issued by Gladstone did not entirely satisfy Chamberlain in this regard, though a letter of a later date from the Liberal leader gave him reason to believe that a concession would

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189, 190, 211, 233; other references advocating compulsory sale: *Times*, Oct. 20 and Nov. 5, 1885, Jan. 12, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, pp. 170, 171. In a speech at Birmingham, October 20, 1885, in which Chamberlain discussed the land question at considerable length, he made no mention of the Three F's. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-253.

be made in the way of some extra powers for local authorities.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, no other demands bearing any relation to the agrarian problem were made by Chamberlain upon his more conservative chief.

When the 1885 elections resulted in an increased Liberal representation in the reformed Parliament, Chamberlain considered that it was the clear duty of the Liberal party to give effect to its election pledges. As essential points to be insisted upon in any future legislation, he named, first, the universal establishment of representative authorities; second, the concession to these authorities, under proper limitations and conditions, of power for the compulsory acquisition of land for public purposes, including the provision of artisans' and labourers' dwellings, allotments and small holdings.<sup>2</sup> In the light of this position, it is significant that in the new Parliament, the Conservative Government accepted defeat upon an amendment to the address moved by Jesse Collings in which he expressed the regret of the House that "no measures were announced for affording facilities to the agricultural labourers and others in the rural districts to obtain allotments and small holdings on equal terms as to rent and security of tenure". The picturesque comment of Mr. Chaplin in opposition to the amendment is likewise illuminating:

Whatever the House may think of this Amendment there is one thing about it at all events about which we shall agree, and that is that it is by no means original; and indeed, though the hands are the hands of Esau it is the voice of Jacob; or it would be more accurate to say, that the hand is the hand of Jesse, but the voice is the voice of Joseph. The proposal we have before us

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, p. 224; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 184 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Impey, Frederic, *Three Acres and a Cow* (London, 1886), *loc. cit.* prefatory note by Chamberlain, pp. 5, 6.

is neither more nor less than our old friends "three acres and a cow," only dressed in Parliamentary guise.

To Chaplin the real issue under consideration was not the short and somewhat inconclusive Amendment proposed by Jesse Collings; it was Chamberlain's scheme for land reform which he had so energetically put before the electors in the campaign so recently come to a close. Whigs as well as Tories sensed the real situation; Mr. Goschen in the course of his remarks congratulated the Radical leader upon the fact that he had transferred a serious item in his unauthorized programme into what was apparently the authorized programme of the Liberal party. Even the Prime Minister in his address before the House did not shrink from giving his sanction to the contentious proposal for the compulsory expropriation of land by local authorities in order that the labourer might be brought into a more effectual association with the soil. The acceptance of the amendment by the Liberals, therefore, Chamberlain quite naturally interpreted as an endorsement of the agrarian proposals of the unauthorized programme—proposals which he aptly characterized as "the details and fringe of the great programme of the Liberal party". Such action by the House would seem to have placed the question of the agricultural labourer's condition in the forefront of those measures to be given the consideration of the new Liberal Ministry.<sup>1</sup>

The events which followed in the spring months of 1886 proved that the Radicals had been entirely too sanguine in their hopes for the fulfillment of any kind of agrarian programme. Even prior to the accession of the Liberals to power, Collings had introduced an Allotments and Small Holdings Bill embodying the substance of the amendment which had brought about the downfall of Lord Salisbury's

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 302 (1886), pp. 443-529.

Ministry. The Liberal Government did not adopt the measure as a Government bill; consequently it was given only a brief second-reading debate and was later withdrawn.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, Chamberlain as President of the Local Government Board, was preparing a Local Government Bill, the enactment of which was really essential to any successful provision for allotments and small holdings. But the Prime Minister was devoting his energies almost entirely to the great Irish problem; in his programme of activities, English agrarian reform along with the other social issues in which Chamberlain was interested was apparently forgotten. When, upon Gladstone's presentation of his tentative Irish proposals, Cabinet discord developed and there followed Chamberlain's resignation and the subsequent disruption of the Liberal party, the preservation of the Union became the one great issue in the Liberal Unionist programme, and attention was for the time divorced from all social politics.

When the long strife over the Home Rule Bill subsided and a Conservative Government held the reins of authority, the Liberal Unionists dared to hope before many months for some concessions in English land reform from their new allies. During the session of 1887, Collings again brought his land proposals before Parliament, but at that time, quite likely as a result of Conservative influence, he separated the question of allotments from small holdings, and prepared two bills—one for the provision of allotments, the other for the creation of freeholds. The former measure the Government proceeded to embody in the Labourer's Allotment Bill which Parliament enacted into law. In January, 1886, the Conservatives had shown a particularly unsympathetic attitude toward small holdings, as indicated in the debate

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 3rd ser., vol. 302, p. 186, vol. 304, pp. 400-416, vol. 306, p. 1841; Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-192.

occasioned by Collings' "three acres and a cow amendment", which had removed them from power; toward allotments they had manifested an entirely different spirit, though the principle of compulsion was not looked upon with favour.<sup>1</sup> Their opposition to the amendment, however, was the one thing firmly entrenched in the Liberal mind. Upon the introduction of the Labourer's Allotments Bill by the Government in 1887, Sir William Harcourt observed with considerable satisfaction that it was "a great thing to find the Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . recommending the unauthorized programme to the Conservative party, and the Conservative party taking to it as if it were their mother's milk". The proposed legislation provided that power be vested in the sanitary authority of any urban or rural district to acquire land for allotments by compulsion, if necessary, and to set apart as much as an acre for each individual labourer willing and able to cultivate it. In the course of the debate, Collings proposed an amendment which would extend the land available for each individual to allotments "not exceeding three acres of pasture and one acre of arable land", so as to make possible his long-cherished ambition that the labourer become the possessor of "three acres and a cow". By this amendment, as Chaplin observed, was raised the whole question between allotments on the one hand and a system of small holdings on the other. Chamberlain was again the ardent supporter of his colleague's amendment, but the Government was not to be won over to this radical step. Therefore, owing to the attitude of the Government and to certain complications arising, the amendment was reluctantly withdrawn. As a substitute, the President of the Local Government Board proposed that the local authorities be allowed to provide land for common pasture, a suggestion accepted by the House. To the Bill

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 302, pp. 448-454, 508-510.

as a whole, Chamberlain naturally gave his support, but he admitted that it was of necessity an imperfect measure, since no perfect measure could possibly be introduced until a complete system of local government was established.<sup>1</sup>

The following year witnessed the inauguration of the Rural Labourers' League, a second organization of its kind whose purpose was to promote the interests of the farm labourers through the medium of the allotments acts. In February, 1888, Collings had been deposed as president of the Allotments and Small Holdings Association due to differences arising from his desertion of the Liberal party. Accordingly, the new League was formed in May, 1888. On that occasion, Chamberlain as the principal speaker reviewed the work accomplished in behalf of the tillers of the soil, and discussed the operations to be undertaken by the new association. He continued his cooperation with the new organization while it devoted itself to putting into operation the allotment acts and other measures passed by Parliament for the benefit of the rural population. The policy that the League sought to advance was always that of occupying ownerships. After one step forward had been taken in the way of fulfilling this purpose, it was especially interested in the accomplishment of the more difficult part of the programme laid out by Chamberlain and Collings—the creation of small holdings.<sup>2</sup>

In the session of 1888, Collings again introduced a Small Holdings Bill, and though it was talked out, one important consequence followed. At the request of Chamberlain, a

<sup>1</sup> 50 and 51 Vict., c. 48; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 319 (1887), pp. 145, 1131; vol. 320, pp. 182-202; Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, p. 193. Collings' Small Holdings Bill did not pass beyond the first reading. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 310 (1887), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, May 14, 1888; Collings & Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-205; Rural Labourers' League, *Third Annual Report*, Feb. 17, 1892. Chamberlain presided at the third annual meeting in 1892.

Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the whole problem of increasing the number of cultivating owners of the land. He was made chairman of the Committee, and under his direction the work was carried on until a final Report was submitted in June, 1890.<sup>1</sup> As a result of its investigation, the Committee recommended to Parliament the desirability of furthering a system of small holdings in which the principle of ownership should be given precedence over that of tenancy. The members considered it advisable, in order that such a system of small cultivating ownerships might be created, to confer upon local authorities power to purchase land for that purpose, and to borrow money from the Public Works Loan Commission. An initial sum to the extent of one-fifth or one-fourth of the purchase money, according to their recommendation, should be provided by the purchasers of any small holding, while the balance would be advanced by the local authorities under certain conditions. One marked divergence from Chamberlain's demands as set forth in the unauthorized programme of 1885 was the advocacy by the Committee of voluntary agreement for the acquisition of land rather than the compulsory expropriation of property. In conjunction with the facilities for purchase, they advised a system of tenancies to the extent of empowering the local authorities to let land in small holdings not exceeding ten acres.<sup>2</sup> The Report showed very definitely that the land proposals of the unauthorized programme were no longer regarded by the Conservatives as such dangerous socialistic experiments as in .

<sup>1</sup> The second reading debate on the Bill shows that the Conservatives were coming to view small holdings in a much more favourable light than they had in January, 1886. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 326 (1888), pp. 470-510.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890, vol. 17, pp. 183-230; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 327 (1888), p. 452. Since Chamberlain was chairman of the Select Committee, it is impossible to ascertain from the Report his exact position on any subject under debate.

January, 1886. At that time, Chaplin, a typical country gentleman, had shown a very uncompromising attitude toward occupying ownerships. Four years later, as a member of the Select Committee on Small Holdings, he could not resist the testimony of the witnesses in favour of them, with the result that parliamentary legislation based on the Report was carried under his direct supervision.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time the Committee was conducting its extensive investigation, Chamberlain was expressing outside of Parliament his own individual opinion on the question of land reform, and it appears in certain instances that he was not in entire agreement with the final recommendations of the Committee. This was especially true regarding the application of Irish land-reform measures to the solution of the problem in England. Thus far, the question of English agrarian reform has been considered almost entirely apart from the Irish situation; but it is readily seen that the agitation aroused by Gladstone's proposals of 1886 and subsequent Conservative land measures could not but reflect on certain phases of the English question. Just as Chamberlain regarded the solution of agrarian difficulties in England as one of the foremost reforms, so he believed that in Ireland, with the land difficulty settled, there would be no need for an Irish Parliament. To solve the Irish problem, he upheld John Bright in his policy that there was no satisfactory solution of the Irish land problem which did not give facilities to the tenant to become the absolute owner of the land he cultivated.<sup>2</sup> The Ashbourne Act of 1887 with its limited provisions for land purchase made possible experimentation in such a policy. The significance of Chamberlain's views,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 302 (1886), pp. 456-464; Collings, *Colonization of Rural Britain*, vol. ii, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 343 (1890), p. 1576; Chamberlain, *Speeches on the Irish Question* (1887-1890), p. 228.



however, for this study, is in relation to the land problem in England. Though he did not favour the indefinite extension of the Act, he advocated the application of its principles to England and Scotland where the farmers might be depended upon for the fulfillment of their obligations. At Glasgow, he put his proposal into definite form in his remark that for the purpose of an experiment he wanted the Government to agree to lend five millions in order to give the same facilities to the tenants of Scotland and England as to the tenants of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the investigation carried on by the Small Holdings Committee in 1888-1890, Chamberlain's proposal to extend the Ashbourne Act to England was endorsed by several witnesses, one of whom considered such a scheme quite preferable to any small holdings plan under the jurisdiction of the local authority. But the final Report of the Committee stated that such a proposal was not designed to be the means of creating small holdings or ownerships where small tenancies did not already prevail, nor did the Committee desire to recommend any scheme involving an appreciable risk of loss to the rate payers of the state.<sup>2</sup> Apparently Chamberlain's proposals for the extension of the Act to England did not meet with encouragement from his Conservative allies; it is at least certain that no steps were taken by him to bring his plans before the House.

Regarding "free land" which he had advocated since the early 'seventies, his faith seems to have weakened during this period. Though he believed that this "panacea of some politicians" was right and he was prepared to support it, he had come to feel that it would not multiply to any sensible extent the number of landowners in the country.

<sup>1</sup> Ashbourne Act—50 and 51 Vict., c. 33; *Times*, Jan. 24 and Feb. 13, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890, vol. 17, p. xi.

In July, 1889, he withdrew from the Free Land League of which he was a member, and from this time on it is not apparent that he concerned himself to any degree with this phase of land reform.<sup>1</sup> In this connexion should be mentioned Lord Cairns' Land Transfer Act of 1882 which aimed to free land from the shackles imposed upon it by the system of entails and family settlements. It produced little effect, owing in part to the depression of agriculture, and in part to certain legal restrictions upon trustees in charge of settled land.<sup>2</sup> Another attempt to deal with this question was made in 1887 when Lord Halsbury introduced a Land Transfer Bill into the House of Lords, a measure that not only contained provisions purposed to cheapen and facilitate the transfer of land, but also included clauses providing for the abolition of primogeniture. The Bill, after passage by the Lords, was introduced into the House of Commons but was later withdrawn by the Government. According to Chamberlain's explanation, "it might have been passed into law had it been favourably received by the Gladstonian party". The exact situation, however, seems to have been that the Liberals offered no opposition to that part of the measure relating to the inheritance of land and the abolition of primogeniture, but on that section relating to registration of titles there was not entire agreement. They had accordingly requested that the Bill be divided and only the first part be proceeded with during that session. Since the Government was not willing to grant this request, no further action on the measure was taken.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Jan. 24 and July 19, 1889. The Free Land League was founded in 1885. Eleven years later it amalgamated with the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association to form the Land Law Reform Association which is regarded as the successor of the Land Tenure Reform Association founded by John Stuart Mill. Bliss, William D. P., *Encyclopedia of Social Reform* (New York and London, 1908), pp. 697, 698.

<sup>2</sup> Lefevre, G. Shaw, *Agrarian Tenures* (London and Paris, 1893), p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 313 (1887), pp. 27-32, vol. 317, pp. 490-492,

One concludes, therefore, that after the year 1890 Chamberlain's hopes for agrarian reform were centered mainly in one plank of the unauthorized programme—the creation of a peasant proprietary through the medium of small holdings made available by the local authorities. A partial fulfillment of this long-cherished hope came in the Small Agricultural Holdings Act of 1892,<sup>1</sup>—a Government measure based almost entirely upon the Report of the Select Committee on Small Holdings, presided over by Chamberlain. The Bill which was under the direction of the President of the Board of Agriculture, provided that the county council should be authorized to buy land for the purpose of reselling to persons who desired to become small owners and were in a position to find at least one-fifth of the purchase money. The remainder was to be found for him by the county council at a low rate of interest. Debate on the measure centered upon the application of compulsion in acquiring the necessary land for the experiment. Following the recommendation of the Select Committee, the Bill provided for the acquisition of land by voluntary agreement. It consequently devolved upon Chamberlain, the most ardent advocate of the principle of compulsion in the days of the unauthorized programme, to explain his acceptance of the Bill. His explanations relate primarily to the recommendations of the Commission against compulsion rather than to his individual opinion on the subject. Their advice was based on two factors: first, that it

932, 1165, 1166, vol. 318, p. 1126; *Times*, Oct. 26, 1887. The Land Transfer Act, 1897, provided for the compulsory registration of all titles to land sold in the future. 60 and 61 Vict., c. 65.

<sup>1</sup> 55 and 56 Vict., c. 31. In this Act, a small holding was defined as land acquired under the Act, which exceeded one acre and either did not exceed fifty acres, or if exceeding fifty acres, was of an annual value not exceeding fifty pounds. Jeyes says that this Act was passed almost undisguisedly in view of the general election. Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain, His Life and Public Career*, vol. i, p. 261.

was a tentative measure and therefore had to be considered in the nature of an experiment. For that purpose they believed that compulsory powers were not absolutely necessary since the evidence obtained in the course of their investigation led them to trust that enough land could be obtained for making the experiment, though without doubt not in every case where land might be required. In the second place, they felt that if compulsory powers were demanded, they would provoke so much opposition both in the House and in the country at large that there would be little chance of the Bill being passed. He admitted that the Commission was of the opinion that compulsion would be an improvement and if they could have hoped to convince the Government of the fact and at the same time not incur the above difficulties, he should have thought it desirable to include the principle in the measure. Later, if the experiment proved favourable to the extension of the legislation, if a case for compulsion were made out, then he held that the strongest possible grounds would be established for coming to Parliament and demanding that compulsion was absolutely necessary for the successful solution of the problem.<sup>1</sup>

To his Liberal opponents, such an explanation was far from satisfactory; it was this occasion that called forth the pertinent comment of Gladstone: "If my right honourable Friend would only recur a little to the ancient faith which he used to have. . . . My right honourable Friend speaks as if there were nobody and nothing to consider in this matter except the apprehensions of nervous landlords, and except the will of a Tory Government."<sup>2</sup> This attitude of the Liberal chief toward his former colleague is easily understood. Whereas, in 1885, Chamberlain had insisted upon the compulsory expropriation of land by local author-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. iii (1892), pp. 1012-1014.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1016, 1017.

ities, as one of the three points indispensable to the starting of a future Liberal Government, seven years later he bowed before the authority of a Tory Government and accepted its decision on the "blessed principle of compulsion". On the other hand, when one considers the concessions the Tories had made to the leader of the Liberal Unionists, one realizes the necessity of concession on his part as well. Without doubt if Chamberlain had held stubbornly to his "ancient faith" on the question of compulsion, the Small Holdings Bill would have met its fate. As he expressed the situation in a speech before his constituents: "What we had to consider was this—Would we accept, I will not say half a loaf but nine-tenths of a loaf, or would we go without bread?"<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the experiment did not meet with great success. Miss Jebb, who has made an extensive investigation of the whole question of small holdings prior to 1907, attributes the failure of the Small Holdings Act of 1892 to three principal causes: the want of sympathy and knowledge on the part of the county council in putting the Act into operation; the emphasis upon facilities for creating small ownerships rather than small tenancies; and the absence of compulsory powers by the local authorities for the acquisition of land. In discussing the inadequate provision for the renting of land, she calls attention to evidence obtained by the Small Holdings Commission to the effect that the ambition of the rural population of England and Wales was rather in the direction of small tenancies than of cultivating ownerships. The Report of the Committee, nevertheless, recommended a system of ownership as preferable to any system of tenancy, except in the case of very small holdings. This recommendation was entirely in accord with the policy that had been advocated by Chamberlain and Collings. In the case of many individuals who did desire to become

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, p. 224; *Times*, June 8, 1892.

owners of small holdings, the deposit of a portion of the purchase money proved a barrier. But regardless of these defects, it must be admitted that the Act met with success where it was put into operation, and moreover, a notable step in advance was made in that the legislature for the first time gave recognition to the policy of advancing public money for the purpose of creating occupying ownerships of land.<sup>1</sup>

After the enactment of the Small Holdings Act of 1892, agrarian reform ceased to be a conspicuous feature of Chamberlain's social programme, though he now and then had occasion during the remaining years of his parliamentary career to express his views on various phases of the subject, both in the House and on the public platform. The first important occasion arose in the allotment clauses of the Local Government Bill of 1894 when Chamberlain had become a member of the opposition party. According to the existing legislation,<sup>2</sup> power for the acquisition of land for allotments was vested in the district councils; by the new proposals the parish council which the Bill would establish as the unit of local government, was to be entrusted with a similar authority. Chamberlain took a prominent part in the rather spirited debates over the procedure that would be required when the parish council was not able to acquire land by voluntary agreement. He strongly upheld the Government in applying the principle of compulsion, though he did not agree with the system proposed to be put into operation when purchase by voluntary agreement was not possible. When compulsory purchase was deemed necessary,

<sup>1</sup> Jebb, L., *The Small Holdings of England* (London, 1907), pp. 329-387; Collings, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> The Allotments Act, 1887 [50 and 51 Vict., c. 48] had been amended by the Allotments Act, 1890 [53 and 54 Vict., c. 65] so as to provide for an appeal to the county council from a sanitary authority (district council), which failed to carry into effect the preceding Act.

the Government proposed that the parish council should petition the district council to inquire into the existing situation. If the inquiry showed that the exercise of compulsory powers seemed necessary, application should be made to the Local Government Board for a provisional order; if granted, no confirmation by Parliament should be required. Chamberlain did not accept this scheme as the most advantageous one to be adopted. He urged that the parish council should appeal in the first instance to the county, rather than to the district, council. In the interest of the labourers and of the public generally, as well as in behalf of justice, he believed that the former authority would prove the more effective body. To the proposal that an order of the Local Government Board should have the force of legislation, he gave his somewhat reluctant consent, but at the same time informed the House that he regarded it as "a tremendous experiment". By the acceptance of the proposal, not only the Local Government Board, but also similar Government offices, would be recognized as competent to deal finally with various matters without reference to the imperial Parliament. The course advocated by Chamberlain that a primary appeal be made to the county council was ultimately adopted by the legislature; the Government proposal to prohibit ultimate appeal to Parliament was accepted after considerable debate.<sup>1</sup>

Though Chamberlain had maintained a conservative position on the above issue, he sustained whole-heartedly the provision of the Bill requiring that in case of compulsory purchase no extra price could be demanded by the land-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 19 (1894), pp. 281-286; vol. 21, pp. 548-556. Chamberlain spoke in favour of Lord Morley's amendment which would have necessitated confirmation by Parliament in exceptional cases. Because of the opposition of the Government to this safeguard of the landowner, he was willing to submit to their wishes.

owner. When land was being taken for a public object of the highest importance, he asserted that a fair price offered sufficient compensation. On the other hand, he objected emphatically during early debate on the Bill to the proposal for compulsory hiring. This he believed to be an illegitimate interference with the rights of property, which could be approved by no fair-minded person. He had apparently changed his mind two months later when he said: "We are all agreed . . . that the principle of compulsion, both in regard to purchase and in regard to hiring, must be adopted."<sup>1</sup>

The passage of the Local Government Bill provided a better opportunity to test through the medium of allotments and small holdings the possibilities for agrarian reform in England. The land provisions did not relate to allotments alone, since the parish council was allowed to rent land in holdings of any size that appeared suitable, provided such land had been hired by voluntary agreement.

In successive sessions, Collings presented to the House private bills in behalf of the agricultural labourer. These related to plans to secure compensation to the allotment holder if he were disturbed, and to provide technical education for the agricultural labourer. To these various measures Chamberlain gave his approval, though neither was given a hearing before the House.<sup>2</sup>

After Chamberlain entered the Colonial Office in 1895, agrarian reform was not emphasized in the Unionist programme of domestic legislation. The agricultural depres-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 19 (1893), pp. 281-286. Chamberlain may have been influenced in this matter of compulsory hiring by a change in the Bill. Whereas the original provision had allowed the hiring of land for seven years, the final legislation increased the minimum to fourteen years. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893, vol. iv, Bill 274, sec. 9; 56 and 57 Vict., c. 73.

<sup>2</sup>*Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 23 (1894), p. 733. For the agricultural bills introduced by Collings, see *Parliamentary Record*, 1888-1894.



sion, however, continued to be so serious as to induce the Unionist Government to introduce the Agricultural Land Rating Bill in 1896. The purpose of the measure was to relieve the rates on agricultural land to the extent of £1,500,000 out of the Exchequer. Land was to be assessed on half its rateable value, while houses and buildings would continue to be rated on the whole of their rateable value. Chamberlain took no part in debate on the Bill, though outside of Parliament he gave his support to the efforts of the Government to deal with "the most important and most suffering of all our industries—agriculture". He did not pretend that the particular relief selected by the Government was a remedy, but it was, at all events, a relief; besides, its proposals were suggested by the Royal Commission appointed by the late Government, on which the majority of members had been Liberals. But the Liberals themselves took a different view. Sir William Harcourt, one of the most strenuous opponents, contended that the Bill was not a relief to the tenant, as was pretended, but on the contrary, a measure of which the purpose was to provide a dole for the landowner.<sup>1</sup> When in 1901 a measure was introduced for the continuance of the Agricultural Rates Act of 1896, the Colonial Secretary again recorded his vote in its favour and was again silent in debate. But, to his opponents, his silent support of such a measure was entirely inconsistent with the views he had expressed in his Radical days. Without doubt it was with considerable pleasure that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman quoted the following comment from a speech delivered by Chamberlain in 1883, in which he had attacked a proposal of his later chief:

<sup>1</sup> 59 and 60 Vict., c. 16; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vols. 16 and 17; *Times*, May 2, 1896; Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, vol. ii, pp. 405, 406.

Lord Salisbury coolly proposes to hand it [the produce of certain new custom duties he advocated] over indirectly, if not directly, to the landlords of the country, in the shape of a contribution in aid of local taxes. I must say I never recollect any public man propose in a franker, I might say in a more audacious manner, to rob Peter to pay Paul. And what makes it worse is that in this case, Peter is represented by the landless millions who have no other wealth than their labour and their toil, while Paul is the great landlord with 20,000 acres, who is seeking to relieve himself of his share of taxation by shifting it on to the shoulders of his less fortunate countrymen.

Chamberlain made no effort to reconcile his position in 1901 with the opinion he had expressed nearly twenty years before. Whatever may have been his personal views on the subject, it certainly was not expedient to advance them for consideration by his colleagues. Furthermore, other matters than the domestic affairs of England were at this time demanding the serious attention of the Colonial Secretary.<sup>1</sup>

When the tariff reform issue became prominent in 1903, Chamberlain presented the fulfillment of his new programme as a means of benefiting the position of the farmers and agricultural labourers. Though it cannot be claimed that he emphasized this phase to any great extent, the successful development of a peasant proprietary he believed to be largely conditional upon a reversal of the policy of free trade. The basis of these contentions will be further discussed in relation to the question of tariff reform.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Edw., c. 13; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 97 (1901), pp. 866, 867; Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Aug. 5, 1904, Jan. 5, 1906. Jesse Collings in *Colonization of Rural Britain* has emphasized the importance of tariff reform in relation to the land problem. To quote his words: "The two questions, Tariff Reform and Land Reform, are interdependent, the one the complement of the other." He believed that the adoption of a tariff would not stay excessive emigration and that through increased employment would come a solution of the social and economic difficulties of town and city. Collings, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 406, 407.

Land reform remains today one of the great unsolved problems of the English nation—a problem for which various solutions have been offered since Chamberlain's political career was ended. It is true that many aspects of the question have changed radically during the present century; the Great War and legislation for the taxation of land values have brought a breaking-up of the vast estates beyond anything dreamed of fifty years ago.<sup>1</sup> But with this change has not come any great promise of the restoration of the peasant proprietary of the seventeenth century or any other desired remedy that might bring greater happiness and prosperity to the rural population of England. If then agrarian reform has engaged and will continue to engage the attention of prominent statesmen, what place does Chamberlain hold in relation to the great movement?

In the first place, he was in the vanguard of statesmen who clearly recognized that a land problem existed and made definite efforts to bring about reform. Following the lead of John Stuart Mill, he was one of the earliest statesmen to exhort the Liberal party to adopt agrarian reform as one of the main planks of its party platform. Although he did not succeed in the accomplishment of this purpose prior to his separation from the party in 1886, still it must be admitted that a new consciousness of the need of reform had developed among Liberal politicians, and in addition that there was a wide acceptance of the main remedy advanced by Chamberlain—the creation of a system of allotments and small holdings.

With the break-up of the Liberal party, an entirely new situation developed. Two of the strongest supporters of agrarian reform entered into alliance with the Conservative landowners who had on the whole shown an unfavourable attitude toward any policy that involved the breaking-up of

<sup>1</sup> *Nation* (New York), vol. 109 (1919), pp. 84, 85.

the land. However, a conciliatory spirit on the part of both Liberal Unionist and Tory resulted in quite unexpected changes. The Allotments Act of 1887 placed on the statute books the principle of compulsory expropriation of property; the Local Government Act of 1888 gave to the labourer and farmer a greater opportunity to promote their community interests; the Royal Commission on Small Holdings of 1888-1890 convinced Conservatives of the desirability of increasing small proprietorships; the enactment of the Small Holdings Act of 1892 definitely pledged the party to the adoption of such a policy, and to that policy it has continued to adhere down to the present day. Without hesitation, then, one may say that the land policy of the Unionist party, the basis of which is occupying ownerships created by State aid,<sup>1</sup> has been largely due to Chamberlain and his Birmingham colleague, Jesse Collings.

Chamberlain's severance of ties with the Liberal party in 1886 naturally could not bring with it a complete divorce of that political group from the proposals which he had so energetically pressed in the unauthorized programme of 1885. Occupying ownerships along the lines indicated by the Radical leader came to be an important item in the Liberal programme and were supported down to 1906 when they gave way to the principle of national ownership of land, as embodied in the Small Holdings Act of 1908.<sup>2</sup> The direct influence of Chamberlain upon that most ardent of land reformers a decade ago—Mr. Lloyd George—is shown in one of the latter's letters to Henry Lucy from whom he had received a volume of "Joe's '84 and '85 speeches". Mr. George in acknowledging the volume wrote: "I read some of them this morning, and I find that they just supply that pungent truculence which I am sure you will admit my

<sup>1</sup> Collings, *op. cit.*, p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-336, 342; 8 Edw. 7 c. 36.

speeches sadly lack, especially in my treatment of the land question.”<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the real success of the land policy that Chamberlain advocated and that he assisted in partially incorporating into legislation, it is not yet possible to make any definitive judgment. Prior to the Great War, the allotments system had not made great headway, but due to the crucial necessity of increasing the production of the soil during that great contest, a decided impetus was given to its development. As a result of this situation, Mr. F. E. Green wrote in 1919: “Allotments have now become woven into the texture of our national life.”<sup>2</sup>

Chamberlain's prediction of the creation of a vast peasant proprietary through the medium of small holdings is still very far from attainment. In addition to the reasons given above for the failure of the Small Holdings Act of 1892, the general attitude of the rural population in England toward ownership of land must be considered. The landlord system that has been so completely woven into English life for a period of over two hundred years has not resulted in an imperative demand on the part of the tenant that he be given a share in the ownership of the soil. Since investment of his available capital in stock has proved far more profitable than investment in land, he has felt that his welfare would be advanced by laws that would adequately protect his tenant right. Moreover, in the opinion of the vast majority of farmers, small farming has been regarded as uneconomic farming.<sup>3</sup> The Small Holdings Act of 1908

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *The Diary of a Journalist (1910-1916)* (London, 1916), p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Contemporary Review*, vol. 114 (1919), p. 95. In April, 1891, Chamberlain said that as a result of the allotments policy, 97,000 labourers had obtained allotments for the first time. *Times*, Apr. 3, 1891. From 1916 to 1919, there was an increase in allotments of 800,000, or 140 per cent, making a total of 1,500,000. *Contemporary Review*, vol. 114 (1919), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 694, 695; *Wisconsin University Bulletin*, vol. i (1904-1906), pp. 59, 60.

has recognized this preference of the rural population for tenancy of land rather than purchase, though it would be generally admitted that this legislation will not result in the exact fulfillment of the goal aimed at by Chamberlain. As the defects of existing legislation are remedied and as the possibilities of small farming by scientific methods become better known, the policy of small holdings may at some future time become an important factor in the solution of the agrarian problem. At all events, if it is to be said that John Stuart Mill has given to England the classic argument for the view of those who would seek reform by increasing the number in possession of small holdings, then to Collings and Chamberlain must be given the credit of so popularizing the proposal as to make possible the enactment of laws that would test the value of such a scheme of land reform.

Whatever significance may in the future be attached to Chamberlain's contributions to agrarian reform, at least one point must be conceded—the laws enacted under his influence showed a decided departure from the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. The compulsory expropriation of land by local authorities in behalf of the small farmer and labourer did not accord with the time-honoured reverence for the landlord's "freedom of contract" and his "sacred rights of property". In this field of social politics, as in others, he was paving the way for the more radical reform measures of the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CHAMBERLAIN AND LABOUR LEGISLATION

CHAMBERLAIN'S twenty years of experience as a successful manufacturer disclosed to him some of the problems incident to the rapid development of the factory system. That he was conscious of the changes taking place is confirmed by the material which he contributed to an industrial survey of the Midlands. He foresaw in the introduction of large capital and the construction of large mills the extinction of the small manufacturers, which he considered almost an unmixed good. From further development along these lines he believed would come healthier work places, greater regularity of labour, increased demand, lower prices and at the same time higher wages. In the screw trade of Birmingham, these predictions were soon to come true. The principal works were large, the shops airy, well-lighted and heated. The small manufacturer disappeared as the firm of Messrs. Nettlefold & Chamberlain increased in prosperity and gradually absorbed the general wood-screw trade of the district.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the stern economic liberal of the passing generation, Chamberlain gave his sanction to parliamentary legislation intended to advance the condition of the working classes. When the Mines Eight Hours Bill was being debated in 1892, he informed the House of his own early business experience in the matter of hours of labour.

When I was in business—that is some twenty years ago—my

<sup>1</sup> *Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District*. Edited by Samuel Timmins. *Loc. cit.*, Chamberlain, J., "Manufacture of Iron Wood Screws" (London, 1866), pp. 605-609.

firm was working under great pressure twelve hours a day. Shortly afterwards the Factory Acts were applied to Birmingham, and we reduced the hours according to the Acts to ten hours. Again a few years later, we voluntarily reduced to nine hours, after the experiment had been tried for a little time in Newcastle of the nine hours engineers' day.

To his satisfaction, he found that on each occasion the amount of production in the shorter time was almost the same as it had been in the longer hours.<sup>1</sup>

Cordial relations existed between the employees of the firm and their employers. Trade unionism among the workpeople was approved, and it apparently worked for harmony and cooperation. During the twenty years of Chamberlain's membership in the organization, no strikes took place; small differences which occurred were only temporary and they were settled in a friendly spirit. When in the course of Chamberlain's election contest at Sheffield in 1873, calumnies regarding his business dealings were spoken against him, the workmen in his employ met at Southwick and passed resolutions condemning the falsehoods and expressing their confidence in him. The spirit of good will must have been further strengthened by the employer's desire to advance the social and educational welfare of his employees by the establishment of a workmen's club, in connection with which a night school and a debating club were organized. When Chamberlain severed his connection with the firm, his loyal workpeople presented to him a silver salver as a token of respect. In addressing them at that time, he said he could not claim that the firm had been engaged in any particular form of philanthropy in connexion with the works, but they had been actuated by an earnest desire to do justice to all in their employ.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol 2 (1892), p. 1586.

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Morning News*, June 29, 1874; Marris, *Joseph Chamber-*



For many years after the enterprising manufacturer turned from the business of making screws to that of politics, his words and actions mark him as the friend of labour; furthermore, labour recognized her friend. An early indication of his sympathetic attitude while he was still engaged in the screw trade is recorded in the chapter on his municipal career. In 1871, he allied himself with those demanding that the Workshops Act of 1867 be put into operation in Birmingham. Such a measure, incomplete though it might be, gave some promise of improving the conditions of "premature labour" and of lightening the toil of the working class.<sup>1</sup> At about the same time, the agitation for education reform was renewed in the Education Bill of 1870, and here again the ranks of labour could not fail to recognize in Chamberlain, the champion of free, unsectarian and compulsory education, their true friend. The ultimate fulfillment of his programme, in so far as it concerned the provision of free and compulsory education, was largely instrumental in developing among the working classes an abler group of leaders and a more enlightened band of followers largely capable of controlling their own destiny.

His efforts, however, were not confined to reforms which bore only an indirect relation to labour; the programme set forth in a speech at Sheffield in 1873 was an emphatic endorsement of the "free labour" demands put forth by labour itself. So strong is his defense of the rights of labour that one is inclined to forget that the words are those of a wealthy screw manufacturer of Birmingham. Consider his verdict on the relation of capital and labour:

*lain, The Man and the Statesman*, p. 45. On the following day after this address, the Messrs. Chamberlain gave a treat to their workpeople by taking them on a trip to Crystal Palace, London. *Birmingham Morning News*, July 1, 1874.

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Aug. 3, 1870. See chapter ii, pp. 34, 35.

Just so long as masters refuse to admit that their men have just as great a right to combine for their own object as the masters have to combine in order to arrange the terms upon which they shall sell their products, just as long as masters refuse to allow their workpeople a fair voice in the settlement of the terms upon which they give their labour, so long they may expect to hear of strikes, and so long will there be no hope of a happy solution of the difficulties which trouble the relations between capital and labour. One thing is quite certain, whatever employers may think upon this subject, trade unionism is inevitable. . . . I think even if it were possible to repress trade unionism it would not be desirable. I believe that they can be shown to have done much to repress frequency of strikes, to make strikes when they do occur less violent as well as disastrous, and to increase the independence and providence and improve the general character of the working class.<sup>1</sup>

Since he believed that the claims of the labouring class were just, he upheld them in their demands that legislation unfavourable to their interest should be repealed or recast. Legislation of such a character he showed to exist in the Conspiracy Act, the Master and Servant Act, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Following the speech, a resolution was passed calling for their repeal.<sup>2</sup>

A few months later, Chamberlain delivered his electoral address as a parliamentary candidate for Sheffield. He em-

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, p. 27. Mr. Boyd's comment on this speech is as follows: "While ostensibly he attacks the Tories, it is noticeable that the manufacturers come in for the worst of his indictment. To Tories his doctrine may have been less offensive than to free-traders like Mr. Bright, whose colleague he was in the parliamentary representation of Birmingham. Lord Shaftesbury was indeed nearer akin to Mr. Chamberlain than was Mr. Bright at that moment." *Ibid.*, p. 21. At a dinner of the National Association of Carpenters and Joiners in January, 1875, Mr. Chamberlain said that he believed trade unionism had done more than anything else to promote peace and goodwill between employers and employed. *Post*, Jan. 25, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Sept. 26, 1873.

phatically declared that he did not care to go to Parliament as the representative of wealth, which was already sufficiently well represented; he wished to go as the representative of workingmen and dissenters. As in his earlier speech, he stated his support of free labour, and also advocated an extension of the principle of arbitration to the settlement of trade disputes.<sup>1</sup>

This theory he soon had the opportunity of putting into practice. After entering upon his duties as Mayor of Birmingham, Chamberlain was honoured by the confidence of both labour and capital by his appointment as arbitrator of several strikes occurring in the vicinity. His most important services in this connexion were in the settlement of the miners' dispute in South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire attendant upon a strike of over three months' duration. The case was left entirely in his hands, with the request that subsequent questions arising from fluctuation in the price of coal be considered, as well as the settlement of present disputes. The terms proposed by Mayor Chamberlain required the workmen to concede a reduction of wages, but in return for this concession they were to receive a guarantee of fair wages in the future and security against arbitrary and oppressive reductions through the operation of a maximum and minimum wage scale, moving with the selling price of coal. These terms were at once accepted by seven thousand miners in the Cannock Chase district, and, after some further contention, by other colliers of South Staffordshire. He was chairman of the South Staffordshire Wages Board for some years, and in this position he had to decide, whenever there was any difference of opinion, the wages in the coal and iron trades for the whole of the Midland districts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 2, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, June 25, July 3, 4, 16, 1874; *Times*, June 10, 1892.

On another occasion he was appointed arbitrator in the dispute over the wages of the Parksfield and Kingswood Collieries in Gloucestershire. His award at this time provided for an eight-hour day on the three-shift system. His decisions were not, however, favourably received in all cases. An award in settlement of a difficulty among the South Yorkshire ironworkers, providing a reduction of wages, created considerable dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup> But to bring about entire contentment to all concerned is not the good fortune of many arbitrators.

The reaction of Chamberlain, through these negotiations, to Labour is worthy of consideration. In a letter to the *London Times*, he writes: "I have now been concerned in the settlement of wages in several of the most important disputes which have arisen in the last three years, and in all these instances I have found the Trade Union leaders true to their engagements and rather the friends of peace than the counsellors of strife."<sup>2</sup> Other experiences of the Birmingham days offer the same testimony regarding his cordial cooperation with labour. His sympathetic endorsement of the action of the farm labourers in 1874 when they attempted to improve their condition by uniting in the National Union of Agricultural Labourers has already been mentioned.<sup>3</sup> He also offered words of encouragement to another group, the railway workers. When a meeting in their behalf was held at the Town Hall, the Mayor, as the presiding officer, expressed his sympathy with their grievances and endorsed their association with unions and their desire for a nine-hour day. That Chamberlain was regarded as a staunch friend of the labouring class is very clearly shown in an article by W. J. Davis, a prominent labour leader in Birmingham. He refers to a speech given by the former Mayor in his behalf

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, July 2, 1875, Apr. 29, 1876, Nov. 6, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, May 12, 1876.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 201, 202.

when he was a labour candidate for Nechells Ward in 1879. Reverting to the last year of Chamberlain's mayoralty, Davis asserted that at that time the Mayor was the biggest asset the Labour party had because of his fearless advocacy of its claims to public recognition. He also alluded to an interview with Sir William Harcourt who had said in speaking of the well known Birmingham Radical: "Chamberlain is the clearest exponent of the principles of the workers and the most determined man I ever knew to put them into practice."<sup>1</sup>

From this Radical leader much was expected, and his entrance into the field of national affairs must have raised ardent hopes in the hearts of the working people. Then, after four brief parliamentary years, to have their champion enter the ranks of the Government itself tended to arouse even greater expectations. The first important measure designed to benefit the masses of the labouring class was the Employers' Liability Bill of 1880. The President of the Board of Trade assisted in the framing of the Bill, though he did not participate to any extent in the debate before the House. Until 1880 the only legal remedy open to the workman who had suffered bodily injury in the course of his employment was a common-law action against his employer. By the doctrine of common employment, according to which the employer was not liable when the injury was caused to the workman through the negligence of a fellow workman, the chances of success for the injured workman were very slight.<sup>2</sup> The Act of 1880, therefore, proposed to

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, Mar. 5, 1874; *Searchlight of Greater Birmingham*, Nov. 13, 1913, p. 23. When Mr. Davis was a candidate for the School Board in 1875, he expressed the loyalty of the working men to Mr. Chamberlain and said they would support him for Parliament. *Post*, Nov. 19, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> The English workmen felt keenly that the doctrine of common employment was unjust, since in the case of injury to a stranger the master was liable for the negligence of any person whom he employed. This legal refinement dates from the judicial decision in the case of *Priestly versus Fowler* in 1837. Webb, Sidney and Beatrice, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1920), p. 364.

modify the doctrine of common employment, by placing upon the employer greater liability for the injuries sustained by those in his employ. The Bill was enacted into law, but the benefits which the framers had hoped to realize were only very partially attained, mainly due to the extensive litigation which developed.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the actual enactment of radical social reform measures was concerned, nothing was accomplished. Naturally, one or two Radicals surrounded on all sides by those of more conservative ideas, could not effect a great deal. In fact, Chamberlain himself did not fail to absorb a certain degree of the conservatism of his colleagues. As a Minister who shared in the responsibility of a government, he did not find that it was always advisable to emphasize the unpleasant realities in the life of the proletariat. A subtle indication of this is exhibited in the debate on the negotiation of a new French treaty in 1881. In reply to the Opposition's indictment of England's free trade policy and their advocacy of a policy of retaliation, he retorted:

It is said wages have been reduced, and the condition of the working classes is that of great distress; in fact, we have been given to understand that they can hardly keep body and soul together. Undoubtedly there has been a reduction of wages in almost every trade from the level which they reached in the time of greatest inflation; but what is also true is that the purchase power of wages has become considerably greater in the same period, and, as a matter of fact, it appears that the consumption of every important article of necessity or luxury by the working classes has shown a remarkable increase.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Chamberlain understood the distressing conditions

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 253 (1880), pp. 1752-1772; 43 and 44 Vict., c. 42; *Times*, June 10, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 264 (1881), p. 1794.

in the life of the working class as keenly as ever. This was shown in the agitation over the housing situation which developed in 1883. In that year, the Queen became distressed with the reports of the deplorable condition of the homes of the poor in the great towns, and appealed to the Government for an inquiry into the true state of affairs. Thereupon, Sir Charles Dilke, President of the Local Government Board, undertook to acquaint himself with the worst places in the city and put in force the administrative powers possible for improving conditions under the existing laws.

Chamberlain as a result of his municipal experiences could not remain outside the circle of agitation. He was consulted by Dilke in determining what action should be taken in fighting the local Vestries that had been so negligent in enforcing the legislation designed to protect the dwellings of the poor. An ultimate solution of the whole problem, however, was the task with which Chamberlain at once concerned himself. In the *Fortnightly Review* of December, 1883, he presented a complete discussion of the housing needs of both labourer and artisan, together with his proposals for reform. Three obstacles, he stated, stood in the way of reform: efficient and thoroughly representative municipal government was wanting in the city of London; terms of compensation in acquisition of property were so interpreted as to impose heavy loss on the ratepayers; the Artisan's Dwelling Act of 1875 and the acts amending it had not fulfilled the hopes with which they had been introduced. "In fact," he asserted, "they are tainted and paralysed by the incurable timidity with which Parliament, largely recruited from men of great possessions, is accustomed to deal with the sacred rights of property."

To remedy these evils, Chamberlain proposed the adoption of a radical principle of procedure quite different from that advanced by the leader of the Conservative party in the

*National Review* of November, 1883. Lord Salisbury ascribed the existing evils in the housing situation largely to the increasing prosperity of the large cities which had resulted in the constantly increasing dearness of lodgings; therefore, he proposed that the State as the responsible party should lend money to trustees of such an organization as the Peabody Trust to rebuild uninhabitable dwellings or to build competing structures on the plan of the model tenements already erected.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, on the other hand, set forth the following principle:

The expense of making towns habitable for the toilers who dwell in them must be thrown on the land which their toil makes valuable without any effort on the part of the owners. When these owners, not satisfied with the unearned increment which the general prosperity has created, obtain exorbitant returns from their investment by permitting arrangements which make their property a public nuisance and a public danger, the State is entitled to step in and deprive them of the rights which they have abused, paying only such compensation as will fairly represent the worth of their property fairly used.

In accordance with these principles he outlined a definite plan whereby local authorities as the agencies of reform could proceed with their schemes of improvement with far greater success than had been possible in the past.<sup>2</sup>

The agitation finally resulted in the appointment in March, 1884, of a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Dilke. An indication of the importance attached to the task is dis-

<sup>1</sup>George Peabody, the Massachusetts philanthropist, presented the city of London with a series of gifts, amounting to £500,000, to be spent for the poor. From this fund, the Peabody Dwellings for the artisan class have been erected. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 46, pp. 130-131.

<sup>2</sup>Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. i, pp. 509, 510; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 40 (1883), pp. 761-776; *National Review*, vol. 2 (1883), pp. 301-316.



closed in the eminent membership of the Commission. Among those who consented to give their services to the cause were the Prince of Wales, Cardinal Manning and Lord Salisbury. One of the most prominent witnesses summoned to give evidence before the Commission was the former Mayor of the Midland city, who during his term of office had been instrumental in setting in motion the great scheme in behalf of sanitation and town improvement. As Chamberlain presented the various difficulties of the Corporation of Birmingham in solving her gigantic problem, he was given an opportunity to place before the commissioners his ideas regarding the most practical means of improving the housing of the working classes. The views which he had placed before the public in the *Fortnightly Review* six months earlier were to a considerable extent projected into the evidence given. He especially emphasized the acceptance of two principles: that the local authorities be further empowered to acquire at a fair value land and buildings needed for improvement purposes, and that rates should be levied in a higher measure upon the property which derives a distinct and direct advantage from an improvement, instead of upon the community generally, who have only the advantage of the general amelioration in the health of the district. The latter is known as the principle of betterment. Though the Report issued by the Commission made frequent reference to the evidence given by Chamberlain, the more conservative character of its membership prevented the embodiment of his radical proposals in its final recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

At about the same time that the Commission issued its Report, *The Radical Programme* made its appearance, with a complete discussion of the problem of housing. The proposition which it offered as the only true solution of the housing evils was that presented by the Radical leader in the *Fort-*

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1884-1885, vol. 30.

nightly of December, 1883. After great public excitement had been aroused by the publicity given to this vital issue, party politics again intervened, with the result that interest in Commission Reports, *The Radical Programme*, and other propaganda gave way to the all-absorbing Irish question.<sup>1</sup>

Though the stage of settlement for the housing problem had not arrived, one outstanding measure of legislation, important both to labourer and artisan, had been enacted before Glandstone surrendered his powers of government in 1885. This was the Representation of the People Act, to which Chamberlain gave his wholehearted support. Through its provision for an extension of the suffrage to the agricultural community, and for increased representation of that other stronghold of industry, the manufacturing city, it supplied the weapon which in the future was to provide for the proletariat some relief from their distressing conditions. On the other hand, Chamberlain's efforts for that other class of British labour, the seamen, ended in failure so far as the immediate enactment of legislation was concerned.<sup>2</sup>

During Chamberlain's term of office at the Board of Trade, he also maintained his friendly feeling toward the existing labour organizations and their ever-increasing demand for a nine-hour day. In an address at Hanley in 1884, he referred to the trade unions and Friendly Societies of the district in which he was speaking as "those great and useful organizations which have done more than any other cause, except the spread of education, to promote the welfare and the independence of the working classes."<sup>3</sup> In reciprocation, the ranks of labour believed they would find in Chamberlain's unauthorized programme of 1885 and in *The Radical Pro-*

<sup>1</sup> A pamphlet which did much to arouse public feeling was *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* by W. C. Preston. (Boston, 1884).

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, pp. 173-175.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 232; *Times*, Oct. 8, 1884.

*gramme*, which received his sanction, a happy solution of many of their difficulties. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has recalled the thrill of pleasure which went through Radical Scotland when Chamberlain delivered his spirited speech at Glasgow on September 15, 1885. They admired "the candor of the man who based his politics upon the fact that one in every thirty people in the country were on the parish, that one in every ten was on the border of starvation." For the alleviation of such conditions, for the creation of a new social order, it was to the Liberal party that they were directed to turn.<sup>1</sup>

A twelvemonth later what a different situation had developed! The Radical leader in whom the Radicals of all Britain had placed their highest hopes had left his party; his former opponents were soon to become his friends. When the years which followed brought closer association with the Tory party, and ultimate fusion into the Unionist ranks, many of his former Radical friends, especially among the ranks of labour, were convinced that their former leader had betrayed them.<sup>2</sup> To place reliance upon the Tory party, even at that time regarded as the bulwark of aristocracy and wealth, was inconceivable. Furthermore, Gladstone's Home Rule policy did not present such alarming features to them as to Chamberlain.

Accordingly, the following years of his political career do not reveal the same cooperation with labour, as it steadily rose in power and vigour, and assumed definite form as a political force. This fact has added meaning when one realizes that Chamberlain's withdrawal from the Liberal party left the labour element, as it were, without a Liberal leader, and thereby aided in the development of a separate labour party. Chamberlain still continued to believe in and sup-

<sup>1</sup> Milner and Others, *Life of Chamberlain*, *loc. cit.*, Macdonald, "Mr. Chamberlain as a Social Reformer," pp. 164, 165.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

port many claims of the working class, but it was not at all in accord with his views that this class should form a separate political party interested primarily in the advancement of one class. The trade unionism of an earlier day, to which he had given such cordial support, was superseded by a new unionism, which no longer rejected the assistance of the State and which had as its definite object the formation of a Labour party, willing, as he expressed it, "to sell its votes to either political party for the inclusion of its programme in the party platform." His attitude toward the newly formed Labour party was concisely expressed in his characterization of the Labour members of the House of Commons as "fetchers and carriers for the Gladstonian party."<sup>1</sup>

After the extension of the franchise in 1885, he had been among those desirous of making possible the direct representation of labour in Parliament and had advocated the payment of members as one means of accomplishing this. In reply to the argument that the professional politician would be introduced into England, he retorted that to him the argument was by no means conclusive,—doctors, lawyers, manufacturers, working men, all had to learn their trades, and he did not know why politics should be the only business which might be left to amateurs. Seven years later he viewed the problem in a different light. Then he had come to the conclusion that such a concession as payment of members would do little to improve the condition of labour generally. It would tempt some undesirable competitors to whom the salary, however moderate, would be the chief object. In addition to this, he stated that "there was no evidence at all that workingmen preferred men of their own class as representatives in Parliament any more than they would prefer them as doctors for their children or advocates in the law

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 27; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), p. 682; *Times*, June 4, 1894.

courts for themselves." However, he again repeated his opinion expressed many years earlier that there was no conclusive reason why members of Parliament should not be paid like members of the government; on the other hand, he did not think there was any necessity for inaugurating the practice so long as there were so many members to whom the honour of the position and the opportunity for public service were ample reward.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding Chamberlain's unfriendly feeling toward labour leaders and their corresponding attitude toward him,<sup>2</sup> it must not be inferred that there was an estrangement on his part from the working class or any diminution of interest in its welfare. In the first place, he represented a constituency almost entirely working-class,<sup>3</sup> which was satisfied to leave its well being in his hands for a period of over twenty years. Secondly, the programme of social reform which occupied so prominent a place in the Unionist policy during the early 'nineties, and part of which was enacted into legislation, shows conclusively that Chamberlain still had the welfare of the less favoured classes of the country deeply at heart.

A complete statement of his position on the labour ques-

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *op. cit.*, pp. 116, 117; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), pp. 688, 689.

<sup>2</sup> The culmination of the unfriendly feeling between Chamberlain and the Labour leaders was reached in the election campaign of 1900, when in addressing a meeting at Birmingham in opposition to a Labour-Liberal candidate, he said of the Labour members of the House of Commons: "When they come to Parliament they are like fish out of water; their only use is as items in the voting machine." He further declared that to the best of his recollection "not one of those gentlemen had ever initiated or carried through legislation for the benefit of the working classes, though occasionally they had hindered such legislation." *Times*, Oct. 1, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 13 (1893), p. 671. After the enactment of the Redistribution Act of 1885, Birmingham was divided into seven parliamentary districts. Of these, Chamberlain chose to represent West Birmingham, an industrial section of the Borough.

tion is given in a contribution to the *Nineteenth Century* in November, 1892, just a few months after the Liberals had again taken up the reins of government. From the viewpoint of a moderate State Socialist who had a sincere interest in labour, he presented the following suggestions dealing with what he considered most urgent and practical in the general demands of labour:

1. Legislative enforcement of proposals for shortening the hours of work for miners and others engaged in dangerous and especially laborious employments.
2. Local enforcement of trade regulations for the early closing of shops.
3. Establishment of tribunals of arbitration in trade disputes.
4. Compensation for injuries received in the course of employment, and to widows and children in case of death, whenever such injuries or death are not caused by the fault of the person killed or injured.
5. Old-age pensions for the deserving poor.
6. Increased powers and facilities to local authorities to make town improvements, and prepare for the better housing of the working classes.
7. Limitation and control of pauper immigration.
8. Power to local authorities to advance money and to afford facilities to the working classes to become the owners of their own dwellings.

This then was the programme which he had reason to believe might be accepted by the Tory party, though he recognized that there might be differences as to method and detail.<sup>1</sup>

To trace the developments in the working out of this programme and other closely related issues, first during the three-year Liberal regime from 1892-1895, and then through the longer period of Unionist rule, will largely define Chamberlain's relation to labour during the second half of his parliamentary career.

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), pp. 677-710.

When the question of an eight-hour day for miners was put before Chamberlain by a representative of the miners in 1890, he committed himself to the reasonableness of the miners' demand though he did not believe it would be in the interests of the working population to attain this result by legislative action. He then felt that if the miners were left to their own resources their unions would be strong enough to secure the desired object without parliamentary intervention. An increasing demand on the part of the miners for a settlement of the question by the legislature resulted in the introduction of the Mines (Eight Hours) Bill in the spring session of 1892. Chamberlain allied himself with the minority who chose to support the measure and presented one of the strongest arguments given in debate in favour of its acceptance. Speaking authoritatively from his own experience on the subject of the reduction of hours of labour in relation to its effect upon production, he expressed his conviction that a further reduction of hours in the industry of mining would not be accompanied by any of that decrease of production which was so much feared. With regard to the method by which this object should be attained, he did not advance the opinion he had stated two years earlier in favour of action by the miners themselves, but rather advocated legislation as "the simplest, the easiest, the quickest, and the least irritating way of settling the question." The debate on the Bill had special significance in relation to the argument presented by opponents that legislation of such character would be a restraint upon the liberty of the subject. In Chamberlain's system of political economy, such an argument held no meaning. Though he did not favour "continual and impertinent interference" of the State with the liberty of the individual, he upheld without qualification the doctrine expressed by Professor Stanley Jevons "that the State is justified in passing any law, or even in doing any single act which in its

ulterior consequences adds to the sum total of happiness." Nor was he willing to accept the argument that in contravention of precedent, such legislation would interfere with the labour of adult men. On this point he stated that personally he had never been able to see the difference between interference with the labour of adult males and interference with the labour of adult females. But, whatever opinions might be expressed on that issue, he contended that at least Parliament would not be establishing a precedent by such action, as the State had already directly and more often indirectly interfered with adult labour, as in the case of Sunday labour or the Bank holidays.

Since the Bill failed to pass the second reading, legislation on the subject was again proposed when the Liberals were in power. During the spring session of Parliament in 1894, the Bill introduced reached the committee stage in its course, and again Chamberlain, then a member of the Opposition, participated in debate. He still supported the principle of the measure, but he did not give his approval to the arbitrary application of an eight-hour day to the miners in every part of England, irrespective of their willingness to concur in such a restriction. He therefore defended an amendment which would extend the right of local option to the miners in the various districts. Since this restriction was entirely unsatisfactory to the friends of the Bill, the measure was withdrawn.<sup>1</sup> Although private bills for the establishment of an eight-hour day for miners continued to appear quite regularly after the Conservatives gained control in 1895, slight progress was made, and Chamberlain, having entered a Government unsympathetic to the enactment of such legislation, was among those who sanctioned its indefinite postponement. Not until the Liberals set in motion their ad-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 28, 1890; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 2 (1892), pp. 1582-1592, vol. 28 (1894), pp. 1031-1041, 1150.



vanced programme of social reform over a decade later, did the final enactment of a miners' eight-hour law take place.<sup>1</sup>

By means of legislation of a different character, however, Chamberlain was rendering a real service to the miners of England. A year after he had entered into an alliance with his former opponents, the Coal Mines Regulation Act, sometimes called the charter of the miners, had been enacted, and the measure had done a great deal to lessen loss of life and to improve the position of those employed. In 1891, he accepted appointment to the chairmanship of a Royal Commission to inquire into explosions from coal dust in mines. After extensive evidence had been taken on the subject and special experiments had been made in order to test the inflammability of different kinds of coal dust, the Commission rendered its final Report in 1894, making special recommendations in the way of precautionary measures which needed to be put into operation. These recommendations formed the basis of the Coal Mines Regulation Bill introduced by Mr. Asquith in the session of 1895. However, the measure was not carried beyond the first reading. The failure of the Government to enact the Bill into law was the subject of criticism by Chamberlain; he claimed that it was not passed simply because Mr. Asquith had put it aside in order to try to disestablish the Church in Wales. The following year, after a change of government had again taken place, legislation of a similar character to that introduced by the Liberals was enacted.

Though Chamberlain was willing to give his qualified vote to an eight-hour day for miners, he considered it a waste of time even to consider the demand of the new unionists that a maximum eight-hour day should be the limit in every trade and employment. He believed there was absolutely no evidence that the workers in the majority of trades would accept

<sup>1</sup> 8 Edw. 7 c. 57. See *Parliamentary Record*, 1895-1908, for record of bills introduced.

such an arrangement.<sup>1</sup> Statesmen generally were then and still are far removed from the enactment of such a contentious measure of reform.

The second item of Chamberlain's labour programme, local enforcement of trade regulations for the early closing of shops, was a subject which had been under discussion for several years. During the election campaign of 1885, the member from West Birmingham had expressed an opinion before his constituents in favour of shorter hours for shopkeepers, but no proposal of legislation was made; it was merely an exhortation to local action that reckless competition might be eliminated. Since it proved impossible to secure the unanimous consent of the shopkeepers to a voluntary agreement, Chamberlain came to the conclusion several years later that it would be advisable to resort to legislation. He believed that a law would be adequate which would give power to the local authorities in each district, on the application of a large majority of any trade, to approve of regulations prepared by the representatives of the trade, and dealing with holidays and the hours of closing. The question aroused considerable agitation in Birmingham and in the same year Chamberlain moved a resolution in favour of such legislation, at a meeting held in the Town Hall in support of the Early Closing Association.

In the session of 1893, the subject was brought to the attention of Parliament by a resolution presented by Sir John Lubbock who had been labouring in the cause for twenty years. He was strongly supported by the Member from West Birmingham in a convincing speech. The question of interference with adult labour was again involved, but Chamberlain did not find that it caused the

<sup>1</sup> 50 and 51 Vict., c. 58; 59 and 60 Vict., c. 43; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1894, vol. 24 [c. 7401]; *Times*, July 18, 1895; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 32 (1895), p. 942; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), p. 689.

same agitation at this time as on former occasions. He observed with satisfaction the admission of the Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, that the idea of interference with the liberty of adult labour was an economic abstraction which had ceased to have any influence, at least as far as he [Mr. Asquith] was concerned. Chamberlain said that to him this was especially gratifying since he had never entertained any respect for that economic abstraction; therefore, he was glad to find that, when a short time before they had banished political economy to Saturn, they had banished that particular portion of the economic doctrine at the same time, and that they had, no doubt, adopted Saturnalian philosophy in place of it. Though the resolution was agreed to by the House, the friends of the proposal were not successful in making much progress. In the sessions of 1894 and 1895, bills prepared by Sir John Lubbock, Chamberlain and others were introduced, and in the second instance the measure was referred to a Select Committee. After the return of the Conservatives to power, Chamberlain was busily engaged at the Colonial Office, but Sir John and others interested in the question persevered in their efforts until the Shops Hour Bill, characterized as a "very mild and homeopathic measure of reform" was enacted into law in 1904. Chamberlain without doubt aided somewhat in the development of public interest in the question prior to 1896, though he apparently had no share in the efforts which continued from that time until 1904 when partial success, at least, was attained.<sup>1</sup>

In order that more satisfactory relations might be established between capital and labour, Chamberlain gave his cordial endorsement to that specification found in all trade

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Nov. 19, 1885, Sept. 15, 1892; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), p. 691; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 10 (1893), pp. 731, 747-756, vol. 22 (1894), p. 456, vol. 30 (1895), p. 316; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vol. 12, pp. 635 *et seq.*; 4 Edw. 7 c. 31. A more complete measure was enacted in 1912. 2 Geo. 5 c. 3.

union programmes in favour of boards of arbitration and conciliation. It will be recalled that during the 'seventies he had met with considerable success as an arbitrator in settling trade disputes. Because of these experiences, he was optimistic as to what might be accomplished if more effective legislation on the subject were enacted. One special difficulty existed in that none of the statutes in force contained adequate provisions regarding future rates of wages or conditions of labour. The main solution of the problem, he believed, would be found in "the establishment of a judicial and impartial tribunal commanding public confidence, to which all the disputes ordinarily settled by strikes could be referred." Though "the decision of the tribunal could only be accepted as authoritative opinion of a competent court and not be enforced at law," the force of public opinion would be an important factor in influencing the parties involved to abide by its decrees.<sup>1</sup>

Political interest in the subject resulted in the introduction of Government bills during the sessions of 1894 and 1895. When the first reading of the Conciliation Bill of 1895 gave rise to rather heated debate, Chamberlain was among those to express dissatisfaction with the Government proposal. The measure provided not only that the Board of Trade should have authority to establish boards of conciliation in any district or trade where adequate means for the settlement of disputes did not already exist, but also that to county and borough councils should be extended a similar privilege. Authority was also to be vested in the Board of Trade to exercise certain powers of intervention in arranging for the settlement of trade disputes. Chamberlain based his criticism of these proposals on the contention that permission would be given to create tribunals which would be less authoritative than those which were already in existence.

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), pp. 692, 693.

He believed that they should establish a Board of Arbitration "so influential, so authoritative, so dignified, that no body of employers or workmen would dare to refuse to submit their case to it." The Bill finally passed the second reading, but no further action was taken after it was referred to the Standing Committee on Trade.<sup>1</sup>

The following session the Conservatives were again in a position to present their solution of the problem. A Government bill which had been prepared by the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Ritchie, the Home Secretary, Sir Matthew White Ridley, and the Colonial Secretary, was accordingly introduced early in the session. It does not seem that the measure very clearly fulfilled the ideal which had previously been set forth by Chamberlain; however, it proved to be reasonably successful in operation. As George Howell has observed: "In the modesty of its provisions lies the strength of the Act." This Act—the Conciliation Act of 1896—repealed all former acts dealing with the subject, and also the annoying limitations not to "fix the future rate of wages." Provision was made for the registration of boards of conciliation then in existence and those subsequently established. As in the preceding Liberal measure, power was also vested in the Board of Trade to establish boards of conciliation where they were needed, but a similar right was not granted to the local authority. Limited power to intervene in the settlement of disputes was also accorded to the Board of Trade. By this Act an important step was taken in adjusting the constantly arising differences between capital and labour.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vol. i, pp. 459-465; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 31 (1895), pp. 404-407, vol. 34, pp. 859, 860.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 37 (1896), pp. 791-795; 59 and 60 Vict., c. 30; Howell, George, *Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders* (New York and London, 1902), p. 444. Regarding the results of the Conciliation Act of 1896, see Staker, William Henry, *The Industrial Courts Act 1919 and Conciliation and Arbitration in Industrial Disputes* (London, 1920), pp. 3, 4.

The fourth suggestion found in Chamberlain's labour programme of 1892—the provision of workmen's compensation—has proved one of vital significance, first, because of its enactment into law; second, because the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 in connexion with subsequent legislation has proved efficacious in alleviating the distressing conditions which have always resulted from the thousands of accidents suffered by the labouring class. Early in the 'nineties, the dissatisfaction arising from the litigation which developed under the Employer's Liability Act of 1880 made evident to both political parties the necessity of more effective legislation on the subject. The Liberal Government, therefore, made an attempt to remedy the situation in the session of 1893. The principle upon which the Bill was founded was that "where a person on his own responsibility sets in motion agencies which create risks for others, he ought to be civilly responsible for the consequences." The principle was limited, however, by allowing the employer to plead in defense that the injured man was guilty of "contributory negligence." The old doctrine of common employment was to be entirely abolished by the proposed legislation; moreover, the system of contracting out was also to be done away with. By this latter system, employers entered into agreement with their workmen for the provision of compensation in all cases of accidents. Chamberlain recognized the worthy purpose of the Bill, but he did not believe that the real solution was to be found in placing such additional responsibility upon the employer so long as more than half of the accidents which occurred in the United Kingdom would still be unprovided for. He therefore moved an amendment to the second reading of the Bill "that no amendment of the Law relating to Employer's Liability will be final or satisfactory which does not provide compensation to workmen for all injuries sustained in the ordinary course of their employment and not caused by

their own acts of default." Though he ultimately withdrew the amendment and the second reading was passed without division, his later speeches do not show a very willing acceptance of the measure. The Bill was finally wrecked by the Lord's amendments which provided for contracting out, and which the Commons refused to accept. Chamberlain was among those who defended the action of the Lords. He upbraided the Government for throwing out the whole of the Bill because they could not get their way on contracting out. Inasmuch as it had been materially improved while under consideration, "the improvements having been largely suggested by their opponents," he contended that the Ministry were not justified in withdrawing the measure. He maintained that under the amendment, employers would be able "to contract themselves out of the law" only by undertaking liabilities and responsibilities greater than the law imposed upon them. On the other hand, Gladstone held that vindication of the Government's position was to be found in the prevailing mind of the working class against the contracting-out system—an opposition based on their belief that the system tended directly and powerfully to impair the independence of their position in the face of their employers.<sup>1</sup>

When the control of legislation again came into the hands of the Conservative Government in 1895, it was free to proceed with its alternative proposal of universal and compulsory compensation which had already been presented to the House in the amendment moved by Chamberlain to the second reading of the Employers' Liability Act of 1893. Not until the session of 1897, however, was the Workmen's Compensation Bill introduced into the House. Though the measure was in charge of the Home Secretary, Sir Matthew White

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 8 (1893), pp. 1948, 1961-1971, vol. 18, pp. 1561-1581, vol. 21, pp. 851-854, 869-872; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893, vol. 3, pp. 45-75.

Ridley, the Colonial Secretary assisted materially in drafting the Bill, and assumed a large share of the responsibility in conducting it through the various stages of procedure before the House.<sup>1</sup>

A veritable revolution in the branch of law concerning the legal relationship between employer and workman in certain occupations was effected by the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897. A liability was imposed upon the employer to pay compensation to an injured workman or to the dependants of a workman who had been killed, without any consideration as to whether there had been negligence on the part of the employer or of a fellow workman. While the Employer's Liability Act of 1880 had provided exceptions to Common Law rules, the Act of 1897 set up an entirely new doctrine regarding the relation between master and servant. The doctrine of common employment was not abolished, but the serious consequences which had arisen from it were largely eliminated. Chamberlain emphasized during the progress of the Bill that since a new principle was being introduced, the measure had been limited somewhat in its scope. The Act was therefore restricted to employments in which the greatest risk was involved—employments "on or in or about a railway, factory, mine, quarry or engineering work . . . and on or in or about any building which exceeds thirty feet in height." Agricultural labourers and domestic servants, as well as seamen, were excluded from its benefits, though Chamberlain explained that the shipping trade had been excluded since it should be dealt with in a separate bill. Contracting out was allowed, but subject to the condition that the registrar of Friendly Societies should be able after inquiry to certify that the scheme which the workman accepted was on the whole not less favourable to the general body of

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 48 (1897), pp. 1421-1427; Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain, His Life and Public Career*, vol. i, p. 347.



workmen and their dependents than the provisions of the Act.<sup>1</sup>

This legislation was somewhat disappointing, largely owing to the drafting defects of the measure, but compared with the Employers' Liability Act, it met with great success. In 1900 the benefits of compensation were extended to the agricultural labourers, and six years later a more comprehensive act further extended its scope and remedied many of the unsatisfactory features of the earlier measure. When the latter bill was before the House, Chamberlain stated his acceptance of its principle, though he objected to the proposed exclusion of certain employments, such as involved domestic servants, clerks and a few others. The experience of over a quarter of a century has now made it clear that it is along the lines of workmen's compensation rather than employers' liability that future legislation of this class will develop. The enactment of workmen's compensation laws by over two-thirds of the states of the United States and all the provinces of the British Dominions<sup>2</sup> is outstanding evidence of the value of the principle, towards the adoption of which no person contributed more than did Joseph Chamberlain.

In marked contrast to the success attained by the Colonial Secretary in achieving the enactment of a workmen's compensation law at the hands of the Unionist Government was his failure to realize the fifth feature of his labour programme of 1892—the adoption of old-age pensions. When in the early 'nineties, Mr. Chamberlain directed the attention of the people of England to this vital subject of making provision for old age, the question was by no means new. The be-

<sup>1</sup> 60 and 61 Vict., c. 37; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1920, vol. 26 [Cmd. 816]; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 48 (1897), pp. 1461-1473, vol. 41, pp. 797-809, 1442 *et seq.* The shipping trade was not dealt with in a separate bill by the Unionist Government, 1895-1905.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1920, vol. 26, pp. 4-8; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 154 (1906), pp. 928-933.

ginnings of the movement may be traced back to the last quarter of the eighteenth century when a bill for establishing life annuities in parishes for the benefit of the industrious poor was actually passed in the House of Commons, but was vetoed by the Lords. The pioneer agitator in behalf of the movement in Chamberlain's day was Canon Blackley who aroused sufficient interest in the question to bring about the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Lords "to inquire into the best system of national provident assurance." The Report of the Committee two years later was based primarily on the scheme of compulsory insurance proposed by Canon Blackley, but was adverse in its recommendation to the adoption of any general obligatory system of superannuated pay. For the present the Committee was disposed to wait for the development of public opinion. In the meantime, the investigations of Charles Booth in East London were providing a scientific plea for the establishment of such pensions. As a result of this inquiry, the investigator came to the conclusion that old age was the chief cause of confirmed pauperism.<sup>1</sup> Canon Blackley may, therefore, be regarded as the pioneer in the nineteenth century in the movement for insuring old age, Mr. Booth as the investigator to give the cause scientific basis, and Mr. Chamberlain as the first prominent statesman to make an effort to bring it into the range of practical politics.

In the spring of 1891, the question began to figure noticeably in the political speeches of the Member for West Birmingham. Germany had recently inaugurated a system of compulsory insurance which was meeting with good results. Although Chamberlain did not believe that the German

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 17 (1771-1774), pp. 791-793; *National Review*, vol. 18 (1892), pp. 721-722; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1887, vol. xi, pp. i-ix; Booth, Charles, *Pauperism and the Endowment of Old Age* (London and New York, 1892), p. 148.

scheme was applicable to English habits and feelings, he was confident that in the acceptance of a voluntary system would be found a satisfactory remedy for much of the great distress suffered by the aged poor. Furthermore, he held that society as a whole owed something to her veterans of industry. In setting forth such a view before his fellow tradesmen, he reminded his audience that he had not altogether forgotten the doctrine of ransom which he had propounded six years before. The idea of old-age pensions, apart from any definite proposal, naturally made a strong popular appeal and so rapidly did interest in the cause develop that within a year Chamberlain announced in the *National Review* that the question might "fairly take its place in the front rank of those great social questions which demand the attention of statesmen and which Parliament is called upon to solve."<sup>1</sup>

The most important development during the year was the consideration of the question by a voluntary Committee of the House of Commons, consisting of sixty or seventy members under the chairmanship of Chamberlain. This general Committee made three decisions of importance: first, that any scheme to have a chance of success for the present should be voluntary and not compulsory; second, that it was essential to obtain the cooperation of at least the larger Friendly Societies; third, that the age at which the pension should commence ought to be fixed at sixty-five years.<sup>2</sup> A Subcommittee consisting of Chamberlain, Rankin, Mallock and Dr. Hunter was then appointed to draw up the outline of a scheme in accordance with the conditions agreed upon, with

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Mar. 18, Nov. 19, 1891; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vol. 15, p. 660; *National Review*, vol. 18 (1892), p. 721.

<sup>2</sup> This would exclude not only the direct scheme of compulsory insurance such as was in operation in Germany, but also an indirect scheme such as suggested by Mr. Booth, by which every person above a certain age should receive a pension on the basis that he contributed his share to the State fund in connexion with the general taxation.

power to consult an actuary. The tentative proposal put forward by the Committee contemplated three cases in which persons desirous of making provision for old age would receive assistance from a pension fund financed by the State. The first provided for a definite payment of 5s. a week to all insured persons, after reaching the age of sixty-five; the second for arrangements by which if the insurer died before his sixty-fifth year, his widow and children might receive payments for certain stated periods; and the third for co-operation with Friendly Societies in the provision that those insuring in such societies for the sums of £6 10s. or £3 18s. respectively might have their pensions doubled by the State at the age of sixty-five. Because of the greater benefits which might be conferred in the second class, larger payments were required. Under this scheme as presented, forty years would have to elapse before any financial benefits would be realized; but Chamberlain explained that if the scheme were adopted, he hoped that provisions dealing with those already over the age of twenty-five would be added.

The framers of this plan upon which actuarial calculations were made asserted no arbitrary claims in favor of their plan; Mr. Chamberlain explained that it was not to be treated as if it were a law of the Medes and Persians, but as a tentative proposal put forward by the Committee to show that in some practical shape their views could be carried into effect. It was to be regarded in the nature of an experiment which might gradually lead to a more complete arrangement. However, one argument of special importance that he presented in favour of his scheme was the encouragement to thrift which should result from its acceptance. The assistance to be given by the State was expected to furnish the desired stimulus for inducing the working class to avail themselves of the opportunities offered, and to make the sacrifice neces-

sary to secure themselves and their families against the uncertain future.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of old-age pensions doubtless played an important part in the election contest of 1892. Yet, it must be borne in mind that many of Chamberlain's political friends, regardless of their acceptance of the principle of his proposal, by no means shared his enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the idea had taken sufficient root to result in the appointment of a Royal Commission by the new Liberal Government in January, 1893, "to consider whether any alterations in the system of Poor Law Relief are desirable, in the case of persons whose destitution is occasioned by incapacity for work, resulting from old age, or whether assistance could otherwise be afforded in those cases." Chamberlain served as a member of the Commission and also appeared as a witness to explain the scheme prepared by the voluntary Committee on old-age pensions. The evidence is important not only in providing a clear explanation of "Mr. Chamberlain's Scheme," but also in revealing the real expectations of the chairman of the Committee for the fulfillment of that scheme. He did not contemplate the levying of additional taxation that the plan might be carried out; he advocated rather that it should be dependent upon the arrival of the time when there was a government surplus which might be applied for the purpose. In the light of this statement, it does not seem that even Chamberlain had any very definite hopes as to the possible enactment of such legislation at an early date. He also made clear that although he did not believe Mr. Booth's scheme was practicable at the present time, it appealed to him as a logical plan and one which might be considered as a complete solution of the problem. The recommendations presented in the Majority Report of the Commission, which was concerned primarily

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vol. xv, pp. 661-677, 698; *National Review*, vol. xviii (1892), pp. 733-739.

with suggested modifications of the Poor Law, were averse to the adoption of any scheme of old-age pensions which had been considered, because of financial and economic difficulties. In the Minority Report signed by Chamberlain and four others, dissatisfaction was expressed with the conclusions of the Commission, and a suggestion was made that a further examination of other plans for the assistance of the aged and respectable poor should be entrusted to a small body of experts who would be especially adapted to deal with the question.<sup>1</sup>

The unfavourable consideration given to the scheme of the parliamentary Committee by the Commission found its counterpart in various expressions of public opinion. The proposal was examined and discussed at many meetings of workingmen and of Friendly Societies but for the most part it was disapproved. This disapproval was based, in the first place, upon the unpopularity of any system of deferred annuities among the working class, and in the second place, upon the fact that no adequate device was presented to bring the scheme into operation until after a period of forty years. The labouring class was more than willing to accept a universal system of pensions such as had been proposed by Mr. Booth, but the adoption of a scheme of deferred annuities involving sacrifice on their part was not such an enticing proposition. When Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister in 1895, Chamberlain could no longer say as he had said three years before: "My old-age pension scheme holds the field." Conditions were certainly not ripe for a settlement of the problem.<sup>2</sup> Just as the Liberal Government found it convenient to submit the whole subject of the condition of the aged poor to a Commission in 1893, so the Conservative Ministry in the second year of its existence accepted the advice

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1895, vols. xiv and xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 69 (1899), p. 74; *Times*, July 18, 1892.

offered in the Minority Report, and appointed a small Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild to consider or devise any scheme which would encourage the industrial population to make provision for old age. After consideration of over a hundred schemes, the Committee issued its Report in 1898, stating the conclusion that none of the schemes submitted would attain the objects which the Government had in view, and that the Committee itself had been unable "to devise any proposal free from grave inherent disadvantages."<sup>1</sup>

Although it would seem that the possibility of Chamberlain's making any further progress in dealing with the subject was practically nil, he asserted a few months after the Report of the Committee was presented, that the subject of old-age pensions stood in the front rank of the great problems with which the Government had to deal; he added, however, that he did not think it possible to deal with the question immediately, but he *hoped* that the Government might do something before it went out of office. The following year, the introduction of an old-age pensions bill by Mr. Holland provided the occasion for Chamberlain to review the part which he had played in the history of the question since 1891; and to present his mature verdict as to its solution. The proposal of a universal scheme he rejected absolutely, not only because he believed it was beyond the resources of the State but also because "it would make no

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1898, vol. 45 [c. 8911]. In the light of the action of the Unionist Ministry on the subject of old-age pensions, the following comment of Chamberlain in a letter to Mr. William Trimble of Enniskillen at the time of the appointment of the Commission on the Aged Poor by the Liberals, is somewhat amusing: 'I am not myself a great believer in Royal Commissions, and in some cases they are clearly appointed merely to save the Government of the day from the necessity of dealing with a question which they think to be inconvenient.' *Times*, Jan. 4, 1894.

distinction whatever between the provident, thrifty, and industrious man, and the drunkard and spendthrift." His personal belief was that the question should be solved by approaching it in sections: in fact, this method was already applied in regard to civil servants, police, municipal officials and school teachers. The situation was becoming complicated by the interest taken in the subject by prominent Liberals; nevertheless, the Government was unwilling to take definite action. Later in the session a Select Committee was appointed to consider again the question but no action was taken after the presentation of their Report.<sup>1</sup>

From this time on, public interest in a universal scheme of old-age pensions was increasing, but Chamberlain had no intention of making concessions to such a demand. In a letter to Mr. Dee, a representative of the Friendly Societies, he wrote in 1902: "As long as extravagant expectations prevail of what is possible, and as long as the Friendly Societies are divided on the question, I do not see how any Government can hope to deal satisfactorily with the question." But the following year he stated before the House that he did not regard the question as a dead letter, and expressed approval of the plan which had been proposed by the Select Committee of 1899. The financial difficulty still stood in the way of its fulfillment. He ventured to add that it might not be impossible to find the funds, but that would involve a review of the fiscal system which he had indicated in his preferential tariff proposals as necessary and desirable at an early date. Upon

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Nov. 16, 1898; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 69 (1899), pp. 75, 76; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1899, vol. viii, no. 296. The Select Committee recommended in its Report that pension authorities should be established in each Union, to receive and determine applications for pensions. A pension fund, the cost of which would be borne by the Union and Exchequer would provide pensions to the amount of 5s. to 7s. a week at the discretion of the guardians. The pension period, subject to renewal or withdrawal, was for a period of three years. *Ibid.*, p. xii.



more careful deliberation, Mr. Chamberlain decided to eliminate entirely the question of old-age pensions from his programme of tariff reform. When in 1906 he was taunted in the House of Commons regarding his unfulfilled promise of old-age pensions, he retorted: "Now I say emphatically, and I defy them to prove to the contrary, that I never have, in the whole course of my political life, made any promise of old-age pensions whatever."<sup>1</sup>

No one will question the opinion stated by Mr. Asquith in 1899 "that no man in the country did more than the Colonial Secretary himself both to awaken the conscience of the people to the scandal of our existing system and to urge upon their judgment the necessity of devising some appropriate form of remedy"; but he did not succeed either in presenting an acceptable scheme for its solution or in meeting the financial difficulty involved. It has also been observed that though he stated before the Royal Commission in 1894 that he would regard the adoption of a universal system of old-age pensions as a complete solution of the question, in later years he repeatedly stated that he did not believe such a system to be either practicable or desirable; at the earlier date he insisted that a gradual development toward such a goal was the policy which he believed to be practicable. The old-age pension bill of 1908 providing pensions for all over seventy years of age was not therefore a measure in accordance with Chamberlain's ideas, though he had contributed in no small part to the development of the public interest which made such legislation possible.<sup>2</sup>

An agitation of far less importance developed from the sixth proposal in Chamberlain's labour programme—the limitation and control of pauper immigration. This demand

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Sept. 22, 1902, Nov. 4, 1905; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 122 (1903), p. 1553, vol. 156 (1906), p. 456.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 70 (1899), p. 408; *Times*, Jan. 24, Sept. 22, 1902.

in connexion with a kindred proposal to prohibit the importation of foreign prison-made goods, was included in the Unionist programme of domestic legislation at the time of the general election of 1895. But a decade passed by before any legislation on the subject was enacted. In 1905, Chamberlain gave his support to the Alien Bill, by which undesirable immigrants were excluded from the United Kingdom. He explained that the principal reason for its introduction was an effort to protect the working classes of the country against the underpaid labour of a low class of immigrants, and thereby to prevent a reduction of wages and a lowering of the standard of life.<sup>1</sup> Legislation to prohibit the importation of foreign-made goods was enacted at an earlier date. A bill prepared by Mr. Ritchie and Mr. Chamberlain was introduced in 1897, and after a somewhat controversial debate on the second reading, in which the Colonial Secretary figured prominently, the measure was passed by a large majority.<sup>2</sup>

The two final features of the programme presented in the *Nineteenth Century* related to the housing question. In 1890 the Housing of the Working Classes Act had given effect to some of the recommendations of the Housing Commission<sup>3</sup> before which Chamberlain had been an important witness. This Act empowered the local authorities to deal with unhealthy areas and unsanitary buildings for the more effective accomplishment of improvement schemes and to purchase land on which houses might be erected for the working classes. But the scope of the Act was not so extensive as to incorporate the suggestion that had been made by Chamberlain for the more successful fulfillment of such operations as the Birmingham improvement scheme. There-

<sup>1</sup> 5 Edw. 7 c. 13; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 145 (1905), pp. 763-767.

<sup>2</sup> 60 and 61 Vict., c. 63; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 49 (1897), pp. 395-448.

<sup>3</sup> The Conservative Government had previously enacted the Housing of the Working Class Act of 1885. 48 and 49 Vict., c. 79.

fore, in the next few years he sought to revive his proposal of the 'eighties to extend further the principle of the Artisans' Dwelling Act and to give large powers to municipalities and local authorities to deal with the crowded and unsanitary areas. He also emphasized the necessity of allowing the corporations to take the territory surrounding the unsanitary areas in order that the charge for the improvements might be made on the owners who would profit thereby. The acceptance of such principles was still somewhat too radical for his Conservative colleagues. The Housing Act of 1900 empowered local authorities to buy land for the erection of workmen's dwellings. Two years later a Joint Select Committee of both houses carried on an extensive investigation of the housing situation. Its recommendations, however, were not carried out by the Unionist Government; in fact, no serious consideration was given to the problem until after the accession of the Liberals to power in 1905.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of betterment, however, which Chamberlain had advocated, was accepted in 1889 by the Progressives on the London County Council, and six years later when the Liberals were in power, Parliament conceded the principle to the County Council in the case of the London County Council (Tower Bridge Southern Approach) Act. Chamberlain furthered the progress of the Bill when he suggested that it be referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses in order to arrange an agreement on the betterment clauses which had been rejected by the Lords in the preceding session. As belief in the idea waxed strong among the Progressives, Chamberlain's enthusiasm was on the wane. He continued to support the principle as a theory, but when it was put into practice, the difficulties in its operation proved almost in-

<sup>1</sup> 53 and 54 Vict., c. 70; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 32 (1892), pp. 706, 707; *Times*, June 4, Oct. 12, 1894; 63 and 64 Vict., c. 59; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1902, vol. v, pp. 801 *et seq.*

superable. Nevertheless, the Conservative Government gave its limited acceptance to the betterment principle in 1899 by the enactment of the London County Council (Improvements) Act.<sup>1</sup>

The second proposal, that the Government should assist workmen to purchase their own homes, was easier of attainment, since it was based upon the same principle as the Small Holdings Act of 1892. But it was at the same time almost inconsequential in effect. The Small Houses Acquisition Act, introduced by the Colonial Secretary in 1899, enabled any person desiring to become the owner of a house which did not exceed £300 in market value, to borrow money for its purchase from the local authority at a low rate of interest, provided he was able to find one-fifth of the purchase price. Though Chamberlain introduced the Bill as a non-controversial measure, the second reading aroused considerable opposition. In Mr. Asquith's opinion, the problem with which the Bill dealt was "such an infinitesimal adumbration of the real problem—the housing of the working classes—that it was hardly worth while to place it on the table." The Labour members also opposed it, mainly because of the hindrance which they believed it would offer to the mobility of labour. Unfortunately Mr. Asquith's comment proved true. As far as the fear that the mobility of labour would be interfered with is concerned, the Act has been used so infrequently that no charge of that character can be laid against it. The housing of the working classes was therefore another question still unsolved at the change of Ministry in 1905.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 58 and 59 Vict., c. 130; 62 and 63 Vict., c. 266; Jephson, *The Making of Modern London*, pp. 57-60; *Times*, Sept. 28, 1894; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 30 (1895), p. 1072.

<sup>2</sup> 62 and 63 Vict., c. 44; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 68 (1899), pp. 785-789, vol. 69, pp. 1336, 1352-1360. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Minister of Health in the present Unionist Government, is attempting to alleviate the distressing housing condition still existent in the large cities. *Spectator*, vol. 133 (1924), pp. 725-726.

The specific labour problems that Chamberlain sought to identify with the Unionist party during the 'nineties have been presented; but two other questions which were brought before Parliament by the Liberal Government of 1892-1895 and with which Chamberlain had been prominently associated during the two previous decades, require consideration. The first is the question of temperance reform, a cause that has commonly been associated with the welfare of the working class, though labour itself has not made any marked contribution toward its solution.

Chamberlain allied himself with the temperance cause early in the 'seventies. In November, 1871, he presided at a meeting of the Birmingham Auxiliary of the United Kingdom Alliance in the Town Hall in support of the Permissive Prohibitive Liquor Bill, a measure in behalf of local option which was introduced by Sir Wilfred Lawson. At that time, Chamberlain without any reservation accepted the principle of the Bill—this did not imply his adherence to all details of the measure—and he spoke approvingly of the organization of the Alliance as "the only one which was aiming definitely and distinctly at the one purpose [temperance] which they had at heart." On the other hand, he made clear that he was not entirely in accord with all its members. Arguments which might prove quite convincing to teetotalers, he stated, did not have the same force "with persons like himself who had never been able to see any inherent wrong in the moderate use of drink, and who shared to the fullest extent in the English horror of restraint upon individual liberty." This position, nevertheless, did not weaken his sensibility of the magnitude of the crying evil of intemperance; he hoped some improvement might be effected by the reduction of the number of public houses. Over two years later when he gave his support to a similar measure in an address at Sheffield, he emphasized more strongly its defective features, and declared

himself in favour of compensation of publicans, a provision not included in the Bill. In the same session of Parliament, a licensing bill which included a provision for extending the number of hours for the sale of intoxicating liquors was introduced by Mr. Cross. Chamberlain, at that time Mayor of Birmingham, registered his disapproval of such a proposal, by casting his vote in favour of the resolution of the Town Council to Parliament, protesting against the extension of hours.<sup>1</sup>

Municipal and educational experiences strengthened his belief in the urgency of temperance reform, with the result that he presented, first to Birmingham and later to Parliament, the modified Gothenberg system, which has already been discussed in connexion with his municipal activities. It will be recalled that by this scheme the Corporation would buy up the existing liquor interests and carry on the trade for the benefit of the people. In presenting the proposal to the Birmingham Liberal Association, he declared: "There is no doubt but that drink is a curse of the country, injuring the health, ruining the fortunes, and destroying the lives of one in twenty, or even one in ten, of the population." Temperance reform, he therefore believed, lay at the bottom of all further political, social and religious progress. It is readily seen that a proposal of this type would not be quickly accepted by extreme temperance reformers, especially since an essential condition of the scheme was fair compensation to the publicans. Mr. Chamberlain branded as the worst friends of the temperance cause those extreme advocates who demanded in their programme the promise of absolute suppression of the liquor traffic. He thought that a man might very well be excused for refusing to give up what was to him a real enjoyment in pursuit of what was only a disputed

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1871, vol. iv, pp. 449-453; *Post*, Nov. 22, 1871, Jan. 2, 1874; *Times*, May 12 and 13, 1874.

theory. His idea was that the enjoyment should be always moderate and that it should involve no injury to others. Chamberlain explained, however, that the principle of local option was embodied in his proposal, since a community having obtained possession of the licenses might abandon them altogether if it thought fit to do so. In his opinion it would not be just or desirable for a large city to carry out such an extreme measure. As has been seen, Birmingham sanctioned the adoption of the modified Gothenburg system, but Parliament withheld its approval.<sup>1</sup>

Never again did Chamberlain attempt to initiate temperance legislation, though he identified himself with the cause on many occasions. Prior to the Liberal ascendancy in 1880, he was among those interested in the restriction of outdoor licenses and he also gave his support to the local option measures introduced into Parliament by Sir Wilfred Lawson.<sup>2</sup> During the Gladstonian regime from 1880 to 1885, resolutions in favour of placing the control of the liquor traffic in the hands of the local authorities were accepted by Parliament on three occasions; twice Chamberlain cast his vote in favour of the resolutions. No further action was taken, but Chamberlain looked forward to the practical application of the principle of local option in connexion with the enactment of local government legislation. The local government measure which he prepared in 1886 during his short term of office at the Local Government Board, contained such provisions, but the Home Rule crisis prevented its presentation to Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. xxv (1876), pp. 631, 632; *Times*, Nov. 17, 1876; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 232 (1877), pp. 1861-1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 233 (1877), p. 1444; Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 253 (1880), pp. 386-389, vol. 262 (1881), pp. 562-564, vol. 278 (1883), pp. 1377-1379, vol. 325 (1888), p. 115; *Times*, Nov. 17, 1885.

When the Conservative Ministry introduced legislation to increase the power of the local authorities in the spring of 1888, the principle of local option in relation to the liquor traffic was incorporated in the measure. This idea in itself was quite acceptable to all parties, but when coupled with the proposal that compensation on a fair and moderate basis be paid to publicans if their licenses were not renewed, a proposal which Chamberlain had advocated even prior to his entrance into Parliament, the ire of prominent Liberals and all extreme temperance reformers was kindled. Though the principle was vigorously defended by Chamberlain and his Conservative allies, so strenuous was the opposition aroused that the clauses were finally withdrawn by the Government. The strife engendered by the proposal could not have failed to develop a spirit of hostility between Chamberlain and all temperance reformers who demanded local option without compensation for publicans. The cordiality once existing between Sir Wilfred Lawson and the former Mayor of Birmingham became transformed into a most unfriendly relationship which was accentuated by subsequent developments.<sup>1</sup> Two years later when Lord Goschen devised a scheme, in combination with a local taxation bill brought in by Mr. Ritchie, for appropriating a new tax on beer and an additional levy on home and foreign spirits to provide a fund to enable local authorities to buy up the public houses in any districts in which they were too numerous, the Member for West Birmingham again gave his approval. He said that he thought the publicans and brewers were the only ones who should

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 324 (1888), pp. 1367, 1368, 1406-1423; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1888, vol. iv, Bill 182, Part 1, secs. 9-14. In 1892, Chamberlain said of the United Kingdom Alliance: "In the whole course of my experience I have never known an association so powerful in regard to its numbers, in regard to its wealth, in regard to the ability by which its principles have been defended, which has done so little". *Times*, July 18, 1892.



complain, since they might say: "This is feeding a dog with a piece of his own tail." <sup>1</sup>

The return of the Liberals to power in 1893 made it possible for Harcourt, the chief opponent of the licensing clauses of the Local Government Bill of 1888, to present legislation incorporating the principle of local option without compensation. When the Direct Veto Bill was introduced, Chamberlain addressed a public meeting held in Birmingham to protest against the measure. At this time, he very definitely separated himself from the programme of the United Kingdom Alliance of which he had once been a member. Observing that he had not remained with the organization very long, he continued: "I found their objects were not my objects. I wanted to promote temperance and moderation; they wanted to secure total abolition. I wanted to stop drunkenness; they wanted to stop drinking. I wanted to save the victims of intemperance; they were much more anxious to punish and to ruin all those who were engaged in the trade." <sup>2</sup> Since the Bill did not pass beyond the first reading, Harcourt again attempted to deal with the question two years later, and brought before the House a measure which would have made possible a reduction in the number of public houses, if an entirely prohibitory action was not desired by the community. But again Chamberlain withheld his support; in fact his belief in any form of local option seems to have weakened if

<sup>1</sup> Elliott, Hon. Arthur D., *The Life of George Joachim Goschen First Viscount Goschen*, 2 vols. (London, 1911), vol. ii, p. 163; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890, vol. 6, pp. 425-437; *Times*, July 18, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1893, vol. iv, pp. 207-217; *Times*, Apr. 7, 1893. At Liverpool in September, 1894, Chamberlain made the following comment regarding the policy of his opponents: "You have an Irish party who want to destroy the Union; you have the Welsh people who are desirous of uprooting an ancient church; you have the Radicals who will annihilate a second chamber; and you have the teetotalers who want to abolish the greatest and most universal of our commercial industries". *Times*, Sept. 6, 1894.

one were to judge from the remark at Stratford-on-Avon to the effect that the Local Veto Bill "would be a gross injustice to the workingman of the parish, to whom a moderate indulgence in drink was a pleasure, a comfort, and it might be a necessity, but who would be deprived because there was in the community a small minority that could not take care of itself."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, more moderate reformers were presenting their solutions, among which the most significant in relation to Chamberlain was a modified Gothenberg system similar to his proposal of the 'seventies. A bill sponsored by the Bishop of Chester was introduced in the House of Lords in 1894. In a speech at Grosvenor House in that year, Chamberlain publicly gave his support to the proposal of the Lord Bishop, and, referring to his own temperance resolution of 1877, said that although his confidence in the soundness of the principles then laid down had not been shaken or destroyed, yet he had allowed the matter to slumber. He realized the almost insurmountable difficulties which stood in the way of putting the scheme into operation in any large cities at that period when the vested liquor interests had increased many fold and were almost entirely in the hands of the large brewing companies. Conscious of this, he advocated that the experiment be tried in a town or district of about 50,000 inhabitants, and if successful, further adoption would be possible. But, as before, the proposal was not accepted.<sup>2</sup>

During the entire course of the temperance agitation, probably no one phase of the question has received more attention than the Sunday closing of public houses. To accomplish this purpose, the advocates of the cause have introduced

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 32 (1895), pp. 1247, 1557; *Times*, July 17, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Record*, 1894, pp. 16, 17; *Times*, July 7, Sept. 28, 1894, Oct. 15, 1901.

into Parliament scores of bills during the past fifty years. Unlike many of those with whom Chamberlain was associated in the United Kingdom Alliance during the 'seventies, he did not favour Sunday closing, as he himself stated in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1876. He withheld his approval owing to the unpopularity that such legislation would incur among the labouring classes and to the fact that its acceptance would be "a distinct admission of the right of the majority to abolish altogether the traffic in liquor." From the standpoint of those who believed the main object of temperance legislation was the diminution of intemperance, he suggested that Saturday closing would prove more effectively the value of such an experiment.<sup>1</sup> In later years, he receded considerably from his early position, probably as a result of the increased favour shown toward the proposal. Gladstone's Government, of which Chamberlain was a member in 1881, gave their sanction to Sunday closing in Wales, in recognition of the principle that the people of a locality should have the privilege of carrying out their own will in such a matter.<sup>2</sup> Seven years later, the Conservatives recognized the same privilege of local option in the licensing clauses of the Local Government Act of 1888; to these Chamberlain gave his unqualified approval. When in March, 1893, he was challenged regarding his position on the Direct Veto Bill, he publicly announced the support that he had previously given to Sunday closing bills. But that he had no arbitrary views regarding this question is more clearly seen in a statement in 1906. In a letter replying to an invitation to attend the annual meeting of the Central Association for Sunday Closing of Public Houses, Mr. Chamberlain expressed his sympathy with the object of the Association but showed in his concluding words that his real feeling was

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 25 (1876), p. 640.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 260 (1881), pp. 1770-1775.

much the same as in the 'seventies. "In carrying out this object, it will, of course, be necessary to consider the convenience of the working classes, who should, as I think, be given some facility for obtaining their dinner and supper beer." Although extreme temperance reformers do not willingly accept such a modified Sunday closing, it is significant that the present licensing regulations provide that public houses may be open five hours on Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

For many years after the Unionist Government regained power in 1895, more pressing problems crowded out temperance legislation of any importance, but during the last three sessions, two measures in which Chamberlain exerted his influence were passed into law. The first related primarily to the sale of intoxicating liquors to drunkards and it was materially improved, through Chamberlain's influence, by the inclusion of provisions which required that clubs should be registered and which gave to licensing benches the power to refuse "off" licenses. By means of the Act, a great good was accomplished through the suppression of the most disreputable clubs. The second measure, the Licensing Act of 1904 which aimed at the reduction of public houses, introduced into law the principle of compensation for publicans.<sup>2</sup> Compensation was to be paid out of a fund raised by an annual charge on the remaining licensed houses. This proposal to create a legal right which had not previously existed aroused the bitterest antagonism of the temperance reformers, but Chamberlain was steadfast in his support of the measure, and gave his sanction in favour of the closure if such action

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Feb. 14, 1889, Mar. 25, 1893, Feb. 17, 1906; 10 Edw. 7 and Geo. 5, ch. 24.

<sup>2</sup> In September, 1903, Mr. Chamberlain addressed a letter to the licensed trade of Birmingham in which he stated that he was in entire accord with his colleagues "in their decision to take the earliest opportunity of legislating to prevent an unjust exercise of the discretionary power of the magistrates in regard to licensing". *Times*, Sept. 25, 1903.

were necessary for its enactment into law. When the Act had been in operation for a period of three years, its advocates pointed to the reduction of four thousand public houses as adequate proof of its inherent value; its opponents still regarded it as an abuse of power and as a betrayal of public confidence, and in order that the nation might acquire full control over its licenses, they presented the Licensing Bill of 1908, the progress of which was blocked by the House of Lords.<sup>1</sup>

Entirely different conclusions, dependent upon one's point of view, will necessarily be arrived at in considering Chamberlain's relation to the temperance question. As a result of his advocacy of the principle of compensation, the majority of Liberals and all extreme temperance reformers, since their determined resistance to its adoption in the Local Government Bill of 1888, did not regard him as a true friend of the temperance cause. Whatever may be said regarding the fairness of compensation to publicans, it must at least be granted that he was consistent in his advocacy of the principle, since even while a member of the United Kingdom Alliance in the 'seventies, he spoke in no uncertain words in its behalf.

From the viewpoint of those who believe in compensation as a means of bringing about a reduction of licenses—a policy which has been supported by the Church of England Temperance Society—Chamberlain's efforts toward the enactment of moderate legislation to reform the drink traffic have been commended. At all events, there should be unanimity in acknowledging that his contributions to the cause of municipal progress, education and other social reform meas-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Edw. 7 c. 28; 4 Edw. 7 c. 23; *The Searchlight of Greater Birmingham*, Nov. 13, 1913, p. 33; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 137 (1904), pp. 564-570; Cababé, Michael, *Time Limit Monopoly Value and Compensation, A Criticism of the Licensing Bill, 1908* (London, 1908), p. 4; Temperance Legislation League, *Speakers' Handbook* (London, 1907), pp. 5-12; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1908, vol. iii, pp. 103-231.

ures were also indirectly contributions to the cause of temperance. As he said in 1885:

Ignorance, intemperance, immorality, and disease, these things are all interdependent and closely connected; and though they are often the cause of poverty, they are still more frequently the consequence of destitution, and if we can do anything to raise the condition of the poor in this country, to elevate the masses of the people, and give them the means of enjoyment and recreation, to afford them opportunities of improvement, we should do more for the morality of this country than anything we can do by laws, however stringent, for the prevention of excess, or the prevention of crime.<sup>1</sup>

The second question of reform which was excluded from Chamberlain's labour programme of the 'nineties, but which was forced upon his attention by Liberal action, was that of graduated taxation. In the unauthorized programme of 1885, this item had been given a fairly prominent place and its consideration by all Radicals was emphasized by its inclusion in the chapter on "Taxation and Finance" in *The Radical Programme*. Mr. Chamberlain, believing that the incidence of taxation was unequal and unjust, advocated the application of the principle of graduated taxation to the death duties and the house tax. Nor was the idea of its extension to the income tax left untouched. In a speech at Ipswich in January, 1885, after referring to Bismarck's proposal to establish a graduated income tax in Germany, he concluded: "We have already done something in this direction in exempting the very smallest incomes from taxation. But I submit it is well worthy of careful consideration whether the principle should not be carried a little further."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, Aug. 4, 1890; Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 121, 166, 167, 171. Lord Hartington in a letter to Lord Granville prior to the autumn campaign of 'eighty-five referred to a conversation with Chamberlain, in which election issues were the subject

Four years later, Chamberlain did not regard this idea with the same favour. In answer to accusations that he had advocated such a tax, he replied that he had advocated the principle of graduated taxation but that he did not propose to apply it to the income tax. He had in view the house tax and the death duties. At the same time he announced his satisfaction with the development of the principle in Lord Goschen's Budget of that year, by which a duty of one per cent was levied on all property, real or personal, of a greater capital value than £10,000.

The real test of the principle came during the Liberal administration when Sir William Harcourt in 1894 included in his Budget a proposal for graduated death duties. Regardless of the opposition to the measure by Lord Goschen, Mr. Chaplin and other Unionist members, Mr. Chamberlain, true to his pronouncement in favour of graduated taxation in 1885, voted with the Government, but not without protesting against the application of the principle by which the graduation would be determined by the value of the estate rather than by the value of the legacy received by the respective heirs. To Sir William Harcourt and the Liberal Government Chamberlain was, therefore, indebted for applying the principle of graduated taxation in behalf of the labouring classes. With this advance he was apparently content, and the Unionists took no further action toward its extension.<sup>1</sup>

Any discussion of Chamberlain's relation to labour is incomplete without reference to his efforts to solve the unemployment problem. During his brief term of office at the

of discussion. He wrote that Chamberlain was going to devote himself chiefly to land questions, but adds: "He also says that he is going for graduated taxation and that Mr. Gladstone is in favour of it". Holland, *Life of Duke of Devonshire*, vol. ii, p. 72.

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, J., *Speeches on the Irish Question (1887-1891)*, p. 199; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 335 (1889), pp. 995-997, vol. 24 (1894), pp. 1244-1246, vol. 25, pp. 353, 354.

Local Government Board in 1886 he took action to alleviate the distress of the working class caused by scarcity of employment. In his official capacity, he addressed a circular letter to the boards of guardians throughout the country, calling their attention to conditions existent among "the ranks of those who do not ordinarily seek Poor Law relief." In behalf of this self-respecting group of society, he requested that the local authorities undertake the execution of public works to provide the much-needed employment. This circular letter is significant in that it may be said to have begun "for good or for evil, a new era as regards the treatment of such of the able-bodied as were classed as 'the unemployed.'" Successive presidents of the Local Government Board repeated Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion that municipal work be provided for the unemployed. In 1895, a Select Committee appointed to consider the question of unemployment endorsed his contention that the unemployed should be specially dealt with, so as to "prevent the stigma of pauperism and the consequent loss of citizenship;" likewise, they accepted and enlarged the remedy which he had inaugurated. A further development of the policy came ten years later in the Unemployed Workman Act of 1905, which made provision for local distress committees empowered to deal by various methods with the "able-bodied unemployed." From Chamberlain's circular letter of 1886 have, therefore, come important developments in the attempt to solve the greatest of all labour problems.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Chamberlain presented a radically different remedy—that of tariff reform—to meet the increasing seriousness of the situation. The provision of new markets through increased stimulation of trade held promise for many a labouring man of the restoration of the right to labour. Since unemployment forms only one aspect of the tariff-reform issue, a more complete treatment of his position will be given later.



From the early days of the Birmingham screw manufacturer to the closing days of the tariff reformer runs one prevailing thread—interest in the working man. This interest in labour, however, is complicated by two developments—the rise of the labour element as an important factor in political affairs, and the injection of the Home Rule crisis of 1886 into the realm of party politics. Prior to the split in the Liberal party, the labour forces, still ineffectively organized, looked to Chamberlain as the great reformer who would make possible the fulfillment of their programme. But in the Liberal Unionist days came the development of a definite class consciousness, the organization of a separate Labour party, and the formation of a definite labour programme primarily in the interest of one class. To a man of Chamberlain's temperament, such class developments did not seem desirable, especially since the labour vote as a whole inclined to his former friends rather than to his Tory colleagues. Even had Chamberlain remained within the Liberal camp, it is not likely that complete harmony would have prevailed.

Whatever rancour and hostility may have existed between Chamberlain and the Labour leaders should never blind one to his real accomplishments in behalf of labour. A deep sympathy with the less fortunate of his fellow men and the belief that the welfare of the United Kingdom was dependent on their social advancement survived all political strife. His contributions to the upbuilding of a wholesome environment for the labouring class, to the establishment of a free system of education, and to the provision of greater protection to the workman through compensation are abundant evidence of his real devotion to the cause of labour.

## CHAPTER IX

### CHAMBERLAIN THE IMPERIALIST IN RELATION TO CHAMBERLAIN THE SOCIAL REFORMER

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN'S place in history is by no means confined to the municipal and social reform policy which was his one vital interest during the first part of his political life. The prominent part which he played in relation to the Irish question, the remarkable assistance which he rendered to the cause of Empire while at the Colonial Office, his agitation for a preferential tariff to strengthen the bonds of imperial union—all these were notable public services. But with these various developments this study is not concerned, save to inquire into the relation of his imperial statesmanship to his position as a social reformer.

In dealing with the Irish question, no attempt will be made either to condemn or to justify the political action taken by Chamberlain during the course of his parliamentary activities; his position will be examined in order to ascertain his view of Irish social problems as affecting Ireland's position in the United Kingdom. Chamberlain became interested in Irish affairs during the 'sixties. As he studied the disorders that had arisen in Ireland, he came to recognize "an indication of a social condition altogether rotten". This it was the bounden duty of statesmen to investigate and reform. In 1866, the Conservative Government introduced a measure to suspend Habeas Corpus in Ireland, owing to the fact that a conspiracy of a formidable nature was threatening. Doubtless influenced by John Bright, who in Parliament appealed for something more than coercion,

Chamberlain sympathized with the Irish in their distress. When, three years later, Mr. Gladstone attempted to alleviate conditions by the disestablishment of the Church which was alien to the majority of the Irish people, the Birmingham Radical emphatically endorsed his policy. This position was not merely the result of Chamberlain's Nonconformist training; apart from personal feeling, he looked upon the existence of the Established Church of England in Ireland as a grievance productive of perpetual irritation and discord. By the enactment of the Irish Church Act, at least one step was taken to modify the extreme hostility of the Irish people.<sup>1</sup>

A greater difficulty still remained unsolved—the enslavement of the Irish peasantry to English landlordism. From the very beginning of Chamberlain's interest in Irish affairs, he saw in this agrarian condition a pregnant source of her political troubles. In February, 1880, prior to the fall of Lord Beaconsfield's Ministry, he gave his support to an amendment by Mr. Redmond, which emphasized the duty of Parliament to consider the necessary measures to relieve Irish distress. Redmond referred especially to the tenure of land, the neglect of which by the legislature had been the true cause of constantly recurring dissatisfaction and distress in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> No definite proposals to relieve agrarian distress were made, but it is significant that the schemes of which Chamberlain spoke approvingly were those of Mr. Shaw Lefevre and Mr. Bright in favour of promoting a peasant proprietary.<sup>3</sup> In the Land Act of 1881, however,

<sup>1</sup> Lucy, *Chamberlain's Speeches*, pp. 37, 134; Creswicke, Louis, *The Life of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain*, 4 vols. (London, 1904), vol. i, p. 48; Trevelyan, *Life of John Bright*, p. 347; *Post*, June 15, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain voted with the minority of sixty-six in favour of the amendment; two hundred and sixteen members opposed it. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 250 (1880), pp. 388-395, 447.

<sup>3</sup> A Select Committee of the House of Commons, presided over by Mr.

Gladstone sought to find the main remedy by creating a system of dual ownership of land between landlord and tenant, based on fixity of tenure, free sale, and fair rent. Though Chamberlain had no share in gaining the acceptance of the measure by Parliament, he defended it without reserve on the public platform. To the charge made by Conservative members that a confiscation of the rights of property was involved, and to the demand that compensation be granted, he retorted that there were numberless precedents in the course of English legislation in which legal rights had been found to conflict with public morality and public interests. In such cases, restrictions and limitations had been imposed, and he was not aware that in any instance compensation had been given to those who had been thus treated.<sup>1</sup>

To the measures proposed by Mr. Gladstone for the temporary relief of the Irish tenant, Chamberlain, as President of the Board of Trade, extended cordial support. When the House of Lords rejected the Compensation for Disturbance Bill in 1880, he declared that never in the history of the House had it committed a more unwise and a more unpatriotic act.<sup>2</sup> In spite of great expectations that the Land Act of 1881 would be the final settlement of the

Lefevre, investigated the cause of failure of the "Bright Clauses" of the Irish Land Act of 1870. The principle of land purchase was upheld by the Committee and recommendations made that facilities should be given by the State for the conversion of tenancies into ownerships by purchase. John Bright was a member of the Committee. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1878, vol. xv. Bright was the first politician of note to recommend tenant right and land purchase for Ireland. Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

<sup>1</sup> Lefevre, *Agrarian Tenures*, p. 114; Chamberlain, *Home Rule and the Irish Question*, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. The Compensation for Disturbance Bill proposed to extend to the great body of small tenantry in Ireland temporary protection from eviction from non-payment of rents. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1880, vol. i, pp. 427-439.

agrarian problem, disappointment resulted, due to defects in the measure together with the unsympathetic attitude of the Irish members; the reign of outrage and crime which had become so prevalent after the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill by the Lords in 1880 continued. Legislation, remedial and coercive, was essential. Though Chamberlain reluctantly gave his consent to the Government's policy of coercion, he believed that the only real solution was to be found in the removal of grievances. In 1884, according to Sir Charles Dilke's "Manuscript Memoir", the idea of land purchase was under discussion in the Cabinet. A Land Purchase Bill proposed by Lord Spencer in April involved the advancement of three-fourths of the purchase money. About the same time, Childers, who was supported by the unanimous vote of a Cabinet committee, proposed at Chamberlain's suggestion a scheme for advancing the whole of the purchase money. The Prime Minister also had a scheme of his own "which nobody could understand". Because of diverse opinions, no progress was made with any of the schemes. The following year, when Mr. Gladstone again favoured the introduction of a land-purchase bill, neither Chamberlain nor Dilke would consent to his proposal unless it were coupled definitely with assurances as to local government. The Prime Minister had the impression that such a measure would be acceptable to his Radical colleagues if funds were granted for only one year; when he introduced his bill on May 20, Chamberlain and Dilke immediately resigned. The defeat of the Government on the Budget Bill a few weeks later made unnecessary for the moment a definite settlement of the Irish difficulty; accordingly, all Liberal dissenting elements presented a harmonious front to Lord Salisbury's newly established Ministry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 276 (1883), pp. 802, 803; Lucy, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. iii, pp. 195, 200; Gwynn & Tuckwell, *Life of Dilke*, vol. ii, pp. 132-145.

In the brief period of Conservative control, in which an *entente cordiale* was arranged between the new Government and the Irish party, legislation fruitful of results in the Irish land situation was enacted. In accordance with the recommendations of a Select Committee which inquired into the working of the Irish Land Act of 1881, Lord Ashbourne introduced a bill in which more favourable terms of purchase were available to the Irish tenant. As the total advance from the Treasury was limited to £5,000,000, the measure could be regarded as of an experimental nature only.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain took no part in debate on the bill, but in a speech at Hawick in January, 1887, he referred to the enacted measure as a merely temporary expedient, and said he hoped that no Government would think of giving it great development.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, he asserted at all times his unqualified belief in the principle of peasant proprietorship. His attitude toward the bills introduced for land purchase was determined by various factors. He offered the most strenuous opposition to the Land Purchase Bill introduced by the Home Rule Government of 1886, and contended that the vast sum required for the operation of the measure would lay an unprecedented liability on the British taxpayers, a liability designed to purchase the compliance of the Irish landlords rather than to confer a benefit on the Irish tenants. Moreover, the proposal for land purchase should not be considered apart from the Home Rule issue; Chamberlain presented the argument that it was not right to endanger English credit for the sake of Ireland if she was no longer to be an integral part of the British Empire.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, vol. xi, pp. v-viii; 48 and 49 Vict., c. 73. This Act was supplemented by other measures of the same character in 1887 and 1889. 50 and 51 Vict., c. 33; 51 and 52 Vict., c. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 308 (1886), pp. 624, 625. Mr.

In his opinion, then, the Land Act of 1881, having failed to alleviate materially the agrarian condition in Ireland, proved that dual ownership should be abolished. He suggested working out a plan for land purchase which would not endanger the credit of the British nation. In January, 1887, he presented his proposals to the Round Table Conference which was seeking to establish a *modus vivendi* between the Liberals and the insurgent Liberal Unionists. The transfer of the land to the tenant was to be accomplished by making an Irish local authority responsible for collecting the equivalent of the rent and paying it to the landlord. The failure of the Conference precluded the possibility of incorporating such a plan into Liberal legislation.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, the Conservative Government was confronted with the necessity of making at least a temporary settlement. When in the summer of 1886, the Ministry refused to accept Parnell's demand for a revision of judicial rents and for the inclusion of leaseholds in the Act of 1881, Chamberlain upheld Lord Salisbury in his decision. Nevertheless, when a Royal Commission that had inquired into the condition of the Irish tenants under the existing depression, vindicated in its Report the claims of the Irish members, Chamberlain and other dissenting Liberals brought their influence to bear upon the Government to make a real concession to the distressed peasants. The Land Act of 1887, therefore, provided for the extension of the agrarian legislation of 1881, by granting its benefits to leaseholders

Chamberlain stated in an interview with Mr. Barney O'Brien that his intention "all the time" was to kill the Home Rule Bill. "I was not opposed to Land Purchase. It was the right way to settle the Land Question. But there were many things in the Bill to which I was opposed on principle. My main object in attacking it, though, was to kill the Home Rule Bill". Churchill, *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii, p. 95.

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, June 15, 1887; Gardiner, *Life of Harcourt*, vol. ii, p. 28.

and by making possible the revision of judicial rents. Chamberlain also believed that the subject of arrears of rent should have been dealt with, in accordance with the almost unanimous demand of the Irish members. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in winning over Lord Salisbury to this position, and the tenants continued to be subject to unjust and improper action on the part of the landlords.<sup>1</sup>

No final settlement had thus far been provided; consequently, Chamberlain continued to press for further legislation along the lines of local government and land purchase. It is interesting to note, however, that while he had insisted in 1885 that any proposal for land purchase should be coupled with local government, by 1889 he was advocating that the land question should be dealt with first.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate result of the agitation was the enactment of the Land Purchase Act of 1891, in which the principle of local guarantee was introduced by way of security to the imperial Exchequer for the large purchase advances contemplated. At this time, Chamberlain reverted to his earlier position and tried to convince the Government that the introduction of local government into the Land Purchase Bill would strengthen the measure. In addressing the House of Commons, he said:

What I have always thought would be a possibility, and what I have always desired to impress upon the Chief Secretary is

<sup>1</sup> Jeyes, *Mr. Chamberlain His Life and Public Career*, vol. i, pp. 263, 264; *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 318 (1887), p. 1480; Lefevre, *op. cit.*, p. 137; Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Mar. 21, 1889. At this date, the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association for the Western Division passed a resolution that the time had arrived for the Government to lay before Parliament "such legislative proposals with regard to Ireland as shall embody any improvements in the details of local government and land tenure in that country". At the meeting a letter from Mr. Chamberlain favouring such action was read.



a plan of this kind, that the Local Authority should not merely have the right of vetoing or consenting to the application of its credit, but that after the transaction had taken place, and after the land had been agreed to be bought or sold, the Local Authority should stand in the position of landlord for forty-nine years until the tenant became the absolute freeholder; and that during that period the Local Authority should collect the rent, that it should pay over to the Central Authority the amount due for installments and interest, and the whole of the remainder, which would be a considerable sum, should be for its own use.

Mr. Arthur Balfour, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, who was mainly responsible for the measure, was not favourable to the adoption of Mr. Chamberlain's plan, chiefly for financial reasons; as a result, provisions which would have made for the great improvement of the Bill were not inserted. Regarding other features, the legislation was in accord with the views and principles of the Radical Unionists.<sup>1</sup>

Five years later, the policy was extended by the Land Act of 1896, and finally in 1903, after a conference had been held to adjust differences between the Irish tenants and landlords, Mr. George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, introduced a measure which proposed to advance the money needed to complete the purchase of Irish land. By the enactment of the Bill, £100,000,000 was made available through the issuing of British securities. Not all English members trusted the security on which this advance was to be made. Jeyes informs us that Chamberlain was by no means enamoured of the measure, and, on his return from South Africa, sought to modify it considerably. In the last

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, vol. 352 (1891), pp. 815, 816, 821; 54 and 55 Vict., c. 48. This Act dealt with the problem of congested districts as well as land purchase, a reform with which Chamberlain was in hearty accord. Chamberlain, *Speeches on the Irish Question* (1887-1890), pp. 226, 227.

analysis, Chamberlain's share in the enactment of the last two measures was not an important one, yet the fact remains that the ultimate settlement of the Irish land question was found in the acceptance of land purchase, a policy advocated by Chamberlain throughout his parliamentary membership. Furthermore, this remedial legislation was put into operation by the party of which he was either an affiliated or an active member.<sup>1</sup>

In conjunction with Chamberlain's contention that social disorder in Ireland was based on long-standing agrarian discontent may be placed his advocacy of the extension of local government, which in his mind had a vital social reform significance. Within two years after the passage of the Land Act of 1881, the President of the Board of Trade was presenting to the public his view that lasting order in Ireland could not be restored so long as the people were deprived of their rights. In the months following, communication with the Irish leaders caused him to become even more ardent in his advocacy of local government legislation, with the result that in 1885 he presented to Mr. Gladstone a plan for the establishment of representative county boards, in addition to which there should be created for all Ireland, a central administrative board, endowed chiefly with municipal privileges. Upon the central board would be conferred power over primary education, in part over intermediate, and possibly over higher; also the control of the poor law and sanitary administration, and supervision of the public works. The charge of justice, police and prisons would remain with the executive. When the plan was presented to the Cabinet by the Prime Minister, "all the peers except Lord Granville were against it; all the

<sup>1</sup> 59 and 60 Vict., c. 47; 3 Edw. 7 c. 37; Gwynn, Stephen, *History of Ireland* (London, 1924), p. 491; Jeyes, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 33. For the general result of proceedings under the land purchase acts, 1881-1903, see *Parliamentary Papers*, 1907, vol. xix, pp. 6-8.

Commoners except Lord Hartington were for it". Following this unfortunate disagreement of the Ministers came Mr. Gladstone's proposal of a land-purchase bill, referred to above, to which Dilke and Chamberlain refused their consent, unless coupled with the promise of a local government measure.<sup>1</sup>

The opportune time for the enactment of such legislation was of short duration. Within a few months, Mr. Parnell, emboldened by the prospects of the increased Nationalist vote in the reformed Parliament, no longer countenanced provisional reforms. In the following spring, Mr. Gladstone believed it expedient to give heed to the voice of the Irish members in whose hands lay the balance of power; the policy of Home Rule was accepted by the Liberal party, and proposals for local government, which only a year before were rejected by the Cabinet as making too great concessions, were henceforth rejected by the Liberal leaders as being entirely inadequate.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of local government reform which the Liberals renounced in 1886 Chamberlain trusted might be accomplished at the hands of his Conservative friends who showed some favour toward the granting of remedial measures; but owing to the agrarian disturbances in Ireland and the lack of interest on the part of most of the Conservatives, he was obliged to wait six years before Lord Salisbury consented to the introduction of a local government measure. The bill which was finally presented to the House in 1892 was so restricted by safeguards that it provoked only scorn on the part of both Liberals and Nationalists. Mr. William O'Brien characterized the Bill as "a shabby, insolent, illusory half-measure", and declared that nobody

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 4 (1892), p. 1548; *Times*, Dec. 20, 1882; Morley, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, pp. 193-195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 290-320.

believed in it and nobody wanted it, except possibly the right honourable Member from West Birmingham. There was apparently much truth in this statement, for Conservatives were by no means enthusiastic for the enactment of such legislation. Many of them believed that the creation of nearly two hundred democratic assemblies in a country still engaged in bitter agrarian strife would be a dangerous experiment; consequently, Chamberlain's loyal defense of the measure was of little avail, and though it passed the second reading, it was eventually withdrawn by the Government.<sup>1</sup> However, it was an attempt at least to appease Liberal Unionists and democratic Tories who had committed themselves to the cause of local government reform.

When in 1898 the Unionist Government enacted legislation that was acceptable to all parties, the Colonial Secretary was engaged in other fields of interest; nevertheless, it must be recognized that it was largely due to him that the Unionists had adopted local government reform as a part of their Irish programme, and presented it as an alternative to the Liberal Home Rule policy.

In 1886 Chamberlain had impatiently asserted that the Irish question blocked the solution of urgent social problems; nine years later he became the chief of a government department which would seem to offer little opportunity for the development of his interests. However, it will be seen that his eight years of service in the Colonial Office bear an important relation to social politics. When he accepted the responsibility of the office in 1895, he apparently realized the presence of the social problem in two distinct phases. In the first place, he apprehended the necessity of consider-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 3rd ser., vol. 308 (1886), pp. 132, 133; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1892, vol. iii, pp. 603-660; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. iv (1892), pp. 1536-1565, 1734. Chamberlain protested against the cumulative vote which Mr. Balfour proposed for the protection of the minority landlords. *Ibid.*, p. 1552.

ing the social welfare of Her Majesty's subjects beyond the seas, in so far as it lay within the realm of the imperial Government; secondly, he believed that the advancement of the people of the British Isles was dependent not alone upon the domestic policy of the country, but also upon the fullest development of the resources of those backward colonies which were under British control. Soon after assuming office, he expressed this conviction in an address to a deputation of business men when he said: "It is only in such developments that I see any solution of the social problem with which we are surrounded. Plenty of employment and a contented people go together, and there is no way of securing plenty of employment except by creating new markets and developing the old ones."<sup>1</sup> Throughout his term of office, consistent efforts were made toward the realization of these ideas.

One development that has proved most important in the carrying out of this policy has been the remarkable improvement of health conditions in the tropics. The Medical Advisor of the Colonial Office, Dr. Manson, often regarded as the father of modern tropical medicine, had for many years been engaged with Ross and others in the study of tropical diseases. In the Indian Medical Service, Ross, as a result of his study of the mosquito in relation to malaria, was urging a crusade against the carriers of infection. In Africa, the development of vast areas was retarded by the tsetse fly, which not merely communicated the sleeping sickness to human beings, but also destroyed the beasts of burden, so that only men who had become immune were left for portage. Though it might be possible by determined effort to construct railroads, they were of little use so long as white men could not live in the region to superintend the production needed. Nor could much be accomplished when

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, vol. i, p. xxi; *Times*, July 16, 1895.

the labour supply was being continually decimated or destroyed by epidemics. Largely through the influence of Dr. Manson, the Colonial Secretary came to realize the seriousness of this situation, and through his sympathetic interest and foresight a movement was set on foot which was to have far-reaching results in stimulating study of tropical diseases.

In 1898, Chamberlain addressed a letter to the General Medical Council and to the leading medical schools of the United Kingdom, in which he urged the importance of encouraging the study of tropical medicine. He pointed out to them the necessity of ensuring that "all medical officers selected for appointments in the tropics should enter on their careers with expert knowledge requisite for dealing with such diseases as are prevalent in tropical climates". The Medical Council recognized the worth of the proposal of the Colonial Secretary, and recommended that arrangements be made by the Government for special instruction in tropical medicine, hygiene and climatology for all those entering the colonial medical service or proposing to practice in tropical countries. A few months later, Chamberlain notified all Governors of the Colonies regarding the action he had taken, and impressed upon them these facts: the desirability of a special training for the medical service, the advisability of the leading medical schools of the United Kingdom giving greater prominence to tropical medicine and the advantage to be gained by having all medical reports from the tropical colonies and protectorates recast on one uniform plan.

The following year, the London School of Tropical Medicine came into being. At a banquet presided over by Mr. Chamberlain, a sum of £16,000 was raised for the purpose of giving a suitable equipment to the School and of providing wards for the reception of cases of tropical diseases. Of

this sum, £3,500 was contributed by the Colonial and Foreign Offices. Through private enterprise, a kindred school at Liverpool had also been established—the first institution of its kind in the world. Only certificates are granted by these schools, but their courses qualify for the Diplomas in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene of Cambridge University and of the conjoint board of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of London. The two schools have at different times dispatched expeditions to tropical or to subtropical countries for the study of disease. Scientific interest in the subject has also resulted in the founding of courses in tropical medicine and hygiene at the two great medical schools of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Research study of certain phases of the problem has likewise been undertaken by the Royal Society. In 1898, at the request of the Colonial Secretary, it formed a Malaria Committee for research in Africa. Five years later, this became the Malaria and Tsetse Fly Committee, and soon afterward it assumed its present title—the Tropical Diseases Committee.<sup>1</sup>

The movement resulted in the efficient training of medical men in the special diseases of the tropics, in the inauguration of a scientific inquiry into causes of tropical diseases, and in the collection and dissemination of the knowledge and research carried on by the medical experts in tropical areas. Permanent research laboratories were established in the Federated Malay States, Ceylon, British Guiana, the Leeward Islands and Nigeria. A permanent advisory committee on medical and sanitary matters connected with tropical Africa was also instituted at the Colonial Office.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Balfour, Andrew and Scott, H. H., *Health Problems of the Empire, Past, Present and Future* (New York, 1924), pp. 23-28; Knowles, L. C. A., *The Industrial and Commercial Revolutions in Great Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1921), pp. 343-346; London School of Tropical Medicine, *Report of Proceedings at Royal United Service Institute, 16 October, 1901* (London, 1901); *Times*, Oct. 17, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

The Colonial Nursing Association, with which both Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain were personally associated, has also proved another element of prime importance in the fight against disease. The Association was formed in 1896 by private subscription, for the purpose of supplying trained nurses for the Crown colonies. Government hospitals, it is true, had been established extensively in all colonies, and they provided care and nursing for the natives and poorest classes of the community, but for the better class and well-to-do members of the population the services of a trained nurse in the home were not available. In June, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain forwarded a circular letter to the Governors of the Crown Colonies, expressing his endorsement of this private enterprise, and inviting their cooperation. The funds raised in the early days were supplemented by the generous response of the public to an appeal issued by Mrs. Chamberlain in 1903. The Colonial Secretary enthusiastically endorsed the work as "a Christian work, a charitable work and an Imperial work", and heartily recommended it to his countrymen.<sup>1</sup>

Recognition of Mr. Chamberlain's services to the cause of preventive and tropical medicine while he was at the Colonial Office was given him at a banquet in June, 1904, by the Royal Institute of Public Health. In welcoming the honoured guest, Professor William Smith, president of the Institute, said they wished in a representative manner to express their great indebtedness to a statesman who had done more than any other in the position of the Colonial Secretary to promote the health and increase the strength of their countrymen and fellow-subjects across the seas. In appre-

<sup>1</sup> Lugard, Sir F. D., *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London, 1922), p. 151; *Times*, Oct. 30, 1901; *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 68 (1910), pp. 148-154. Mrs. Mable W. Piggott, the author of the article referred to in the *Nineteenth Century*, was the founder and vice-president of the Colonial Nursing Association.



ciation of his devotion to the cause, an honorary fellowship of the Institute was conferred upon Mr. Chamberlain. Four years later a second honour was bestowed upon him when he was awarded the Mary Kingsley Memorial Medal by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.<sup>1</sup>

The Colonial Secretary also foresaw the beneficial results which would follow from the application of scientific study to other colonial problems besides that of tropical medicine. At the beginning of his term of office, a serious agricultural depression existed in the West Indies. In order to obtain full and authentic information regarding the causes and circumstances of the depression, which related primarily to the sugar industry, a Royal Commission was appointed by Her Majesty in December, 1896. When the Commission issued its Report the following year, one of the principal recommendations was for the establishment of a Department of Economic Botany in the West Indies. The Government accepted this suggestion, and in August, 1898, the Colonial Secretary announced to the House of Commons the establishment of the Imperial Department of Agriculture under the direction of Dr. Morris, Assistant Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew.<sup>2</sup> The application of science to agriculture in this part of the tropics has been an important factor in the restoration of prosperity to the owner of the large estate, the peasant proprietor and the labourer. The functions of the Department have included the maintenance and supervision of botanical and experimental stations, the establishment of agricultural schools, the making of arrangements for teaching the principles of elementary science and agri-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, July 1, 1904; Milner and Others, *Life of Chamberlain*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1898, vol. 50 [c. 8655]; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 63, p. 882. The active operations of the Department have been confined to Barbados, the Windward and Leeward Islands. During the early years the cost of the Department was provided from imperial funds. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1910, vol. 11 [Cd. 5369], p. 38.

culture in the primary and secondary schools, the creation of scholarships, and the issuing of publications. As a result of experimentation in the production of sugar cane, the yield has been increased from ten to twenty-five per cent. The Department has also been largely instrumental in establishing new industries, and has thus relieved many islands from dependence on the sugar industry alone. Cotton, once the great staple of the West Indies, was reintroduced in 1901. From this experiment an especially fine variety of sea island cotton, indispensable for British fine cotton spinning, was successfully introduced. The remarkable success which has attended the efforts of the Department in demonstrating the value of experimental study and the dissemination of agricultural knowledge among the people has justified Chamberlain's firm belief in the efficacy of education, even though, as in this case, it was directed primarily toward the restoration of economic prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

A second recommendation of the West India Royal Commission related particularly to the welfare of the tiller of the soil.<sup>2</sup> In the past, the settlement of the labourer on the land

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 59; Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 348. Another factor of first importance in relieving the agricultural depression of the West Indies was the abolition of the bounties on European sugar, which was advocated by the Commission of 1897. After strenuous efforts on the part of the Colonial Secretary and other statesmen, this was accomplished by the Brussels Convention of 1902. When the Bill to carry its provisions into effect was introduced in the House, it was attacked as an infringement of free trade principles. Mr. Chamberlain defended the proposed legislation as a measure which would secure free trade in sugar and enable England continuously to obtain the product at a fair price from all the markets of the world. *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 126 (1902), pp. 587-667, 690-807 *passim*. In the controversy of the early 'eighties, Chamberlain had upheld the bounty system and opposed countervailing duties. *Times*, Dec. 31, 1880, May 4, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> The Colonial Secretary in a letter to the chairman of the West India Royal Commission instructed him to suggest measures to restore and maintain the prosperity of the colonies and inhabitants, and to

had not been viewed with favour by persons interested in sugar estates. The serious depression in the sugar industry, however, led the commissioners to the conclusion that no reform afforded so good a prospect for the permanent welfare of the West Indies as the settling of the labouring population on the land in peasant holdings. They advised that as sugar lands fell out of cultivation, they either be sold in small lots or leased at low rents to small cultivators. The agricultural instruction to be supplied by the Imperial Department of Agriculture would be especially useful in this connexion. Such a suggestion naturally found favour with the Colonial Secretary who had for many years championed the cause of allotments and small holdings in England. The Colonial Office forwarded instructions to the West India authorities to do everything in their power to establish the labourers on the land in the position of peasant proprietors. In one case, that of St. Vincent, the House voted funds to assist in the fulfilment of this plan. Crown lands were made available in small blocks on very reasonable terms, the payment being spread over a term of years. In this way, a good deal of the land has come into the hands of the peasant class. Fairly favourable terms of purchase were also arranged in other islands. Though the schemes in operation did not result in any phenomenal success, at least an opportunity was provided the ambitious negro labourer to improve his economic status and to assist in the revival of economic prosperity in the islands.<sup>1</sup>

The efforts of the Government in behalf of the labourer in the West Indies is only one illustration of Chamberlain's

ascertain what effect the total or partial extinction of the sugar industry would be likely to have upon the condition of the labouring classes. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1898, vol. 50 [c.-8655], p. v.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18, 31; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 63 (1898), pp. 879, 880, vol. 56, p. 1523; Aspinwall, Algernon E., *The British West Indies, Their History, Resources and Progress* (London, 1913), pp. 246-248.

contention that the rights of the natives should be respected in all British Crown colonies and their welfare advanced. He emphatically condemned the indiscriminate practice of flogging which had been so extensively employed, especially in Africa, by European countries. In a speech before the House, in July, 1901, he said:

Since I have been in my present office I have done . . . more than anyone else has ever done to lessen and diminish materially the extent of that punishment in all our colonies. In connexion with that, I have given instructions, and now receive annual reports from every one of the Crown colonies of the amount of flogging inflicted in the preceding year, and the cause for which it has been awarded.

He did not, however, bring about its entire abolition, but he aimed to surround it by every possible precaution so that it should be confined absolutely to the most serious offenses. Through his efforts also came the abolition of the old "chain-gang" which disgraced British rule in East Africa in the early 'nineties.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain likewise advocated various means, direct and indirect, to modify or eliminate entirely the condition of slavery which existed in those parts of Africa which were being opened by the British to the commerce of the world. His advocacy of this cause began even prior to his acceptance of the Colonial Office. In 1893, when Uganda was still known only as a "British sphere of influence", he was one of the most zealous champions of the development of the territory. He contended that in the building of a railway<sup>2</sup> which would provide an adequate means of portage

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 97 (1901), p. 731, vol. 98, pp. 1494, 1495; Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 560.

<sup>2</sup> Lieut. Col. Mockler-Ferryman says that sixty per cent of captured pagan slaves are eventually used for carrier work. Mockler-Ferryman, A. F., *British Nigeria* (London, 1902), p. 244. In the second year of the Unionist Government (1895-1905), provision was made by Parliament for the construction of the Uganda Railway. 59 and 60 Vict., c. 38.

would be found the only thoroughly effectual method for the suppression and discouragement of the slave trade. Though it must be recognized that his position on the whole question was first of all that of an imperialist, it cannot be doubted that he was deeply concerned that the British Empire should take a prominent part in abolishing the horrors and sufferings in connexion with this trade. When the subject was again under discussion the following year, he also spoke in favour of the abolition of the legal status of the slave in Zanzibar and Pemba, as well as for the development of the inland area of Uganda, as a means of destroying the slave traffic.<sup>1</sup> By abolishing slavery as a status known to the law, permissive freedom is granted to the slave and he becomes endowed with full civil rights. A master is not compelled to dismiss his slaves if they work harmoniously together, but a slave has power to assert his freedom at any time. As all children are born free after such a measure is put into operation, the entire abolition of slavery would be practically accomplished within a generation. During Chamberlain's term of office as Colonial Secretary, the measures he had advocated came into effect. In 1897, the legal status of slavery was abolished in the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Four years later when Sir Fredrick Lugard was High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, similar rights were conferred by proclamation upon the slave population of the Protectorate.<sup>2</sup>

At the close of the Boer War, the Colonial Office was confronted with a native problem in South Africa, though in that part of the continent slavery was formally abolished. To secure the successful development of the mines of the

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. x (1893), pp. 602, 603, vol. 25 (1894), p. 263. See also *ibid.*, vol. 31 (1895), pp. 675, 676.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1897, vol. 62 [c.-8394]; *ibid.*, 1902, vol. 65, pp. 473-513.

Transvaal, however, the native labour was considered indispensable.<sup>1</sup> In case that was insufficient, the mine owners held that the importation of cheap foreign labour either from India or China should be allowed by the Government. When the Colonial Secretary paid an official visit to South Africa in 1902-1903, the seriousness of the situation was impressed upon him.<sup>2</sup> At this period, as in former years, he declared definitely against forced labour, but he willingly gave his sanction to the device of the Government to induce the Kaffir to work. Upon the native it was proposed to levy a consolidated poll tax amounting to £2, and in addition a further tax of £2 for each additional wife. In March, 1903, when Mr. Chamberlain placed his views on the subject before the Commons, he supported this method of taxation and presented among other arguments his view that the practice of polygamy would be thereby discouraged. He did not concur at all in the position of certain members of the Opposition that a system of forced labour was really in existence. For the advantages brought to the native by the British Government, he believed that the taxation was neither unfair on its merits nor excessive in its amount. On the subject of introducing Asiatic or Chinese labour, he expressed the opinion that every possible source of supply should be exhausted before such an expedient be resorted to. Furthermore, he explained that at that date colonial feeling throughout South Africa was by a large majority against any such proposal. But should a self-governing colony like the Cape or Natal desire the importation of persons from any part of the world outside the British territories, he believed there was "no power or authority or right" on the part of Parliament to prevent it. To the proposal that one

<sup>1</sup> In 1903, Kaffir labour could be obtained at 50s. or 60s. a month; skilled white labour at £30 a month. *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 119 (1903), p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> See *Times*, Jan. and Feb., 1903.

thousand natives of Central Africa should be allowed to labour in the mines, he offered no objection; in fact, he did not think it was fair to refuse to them the privilege of working where their labour was most remunerative. The Opposition hotly contested the position of the Colonial Secretary in advocating a cheap labour supply for the Transvaal in order that the colony might be successfully developed; nor did all sympathize with him in his belief that the progress of the native in civilization would not be secured until "he had been convinced of the necessity and dignity of labour".<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain's statement in March, 1903, that colonial opinion in South Africa was against the introduction of Chinese labour and that discussion of the subject was premature did not carry reassurance for many months after the statement was issued. When the mines failed to make the progress which Lord Milner, the High Commissioner of South Africa, believed to be essential to the development of the colony, he gave his support to the movement for the importation of Chinese coolies to the Rand. An ordinance sanctioning their importation was passed in February, 1904, and a month later the consent of the Balfour Administration was obtained. As Mr. Chamberlain was no longer a member of the Government at this time, he bore no share of the responsibility in this action. Within the next two years, over fifty thousand coolies were imported from China to the Transvaal, the labourers being given the right to work in the Rand for a period of three years.<sup>2</sup>

Liberal opposition to this indentured service of the Chinese in a British colony resulted in its becoming an impor-

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 119 (1903), pp. 1277-1283, vol. 120, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Canal, Frank, South Africa from the Great Trek to the Union* (London, 1909), pp. 218, 219; *Annual Register*, 1904, pp. 392-401; McNair, Harley F., *The Chinese Abroad, Their Position and Protection* (Shanghai, China, 1924), p. 233.

tant issue in the election campaign of 1906. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman alleged that it was "tainted with slavery". Chamberlain repeatedly referred to it in his campaign speeches; he asserted that he did not like Chinese labour and that he would not have sanctioned its introduction unless assured that the majority of the people of the Transvaal were in favour of that step. Regarding the continuance of the policy, he held that if they considered it necessary to their prosperity, no one had a right to interfere in the decision. Since practical self-government had been conceded to them, it should not be given with one hand and taken away with the other. He indignantly denied the "lying accounts" of Chinese labour given by some of his opponents, and denounced the use made of the issue in the election campaign. Later when the whole question was debated in Parliament, he expressed the same opinions and requested that a Royal Commission be appointed to investigate the economic and moral issues involved. Though this request was not granted by the Government, the ultimate settlement of the whole question was left to the future Transvaal Responsible Government which was then in the process of development. Meantime, police precautions were increased and the repatriation of undesirables was undertaken with greater zeal. Before the close of 1906, all parties, including the mine owners, had reason to doubt the advisability of the importation of Chinese labour. The conclusion of the matter came in June, 1907, when General Botha, the Prime Minister of the new Transvaal Government, announced to the Assembly that the Labour Ordinance of 1904 would not be reenacted and the Chinese would be sent home immediately on the expiry of their contracts. In accordance with the opinion which Chamberlain had expressed during the entire controversy, the ultimate decision in the matter had been left to the colony itself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spender, J. A., *The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-*



Chamberlain's policy at the Colonial Office dealt principally with purely imperialistic rather than social issues. Nevertheless, one point is abundantly evident — in dealing with all colonial problems he was never guided in his actions by any purposeful adherence to the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. It is not at all surprising that, after eight years' experience in the colonial field where he consciously sought to understand the point of view of British colonial subjects, he should advocate in the interests of both colonists and mother country a departure from *laissez-faire* in trade. Chamberlain's support of a policy of free trade in his early parliamentary days has already been set forth.<sup>1</sup> A period of twenty years brought many changes — the most powerful of the Continental nations were placing their reliance upon protection of their industries, the British dominions were following a similar policy and were asking that at least a preference in trade should be granted by the mother country. The Colonial Secretary, throughout his political life a believer in the greatness of the British Empire, broke away from his early faith and came to accept the idea that "Cobdenism" and practical imperialism could not live together. The traditions of his adopted city help to explain the greater ease with which Chamberlain was able to arrive at this decision. Birmingham seems to have given little assistance to the Anti-Corn Law League. On the other hand, a strong Charist element, unfriendly to the League, had existed in this stronghold of Liberalism.<sup>2</sup>

The first definite pronouncement of the Colonial Secretary in favour of a preferential tariff for the British colo-

*Bannerman*, 2 vols. (London, 1923), vol. ii, pp. 228-244; *Times*, Jan. 1 and 13, 1906; *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 153 (1906), pp. 1292-1299, vol. 154, pp. 399-418; *Annual Register*, 1907, p. 406.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *National Review*, vol. 62 (1914), p. 947.

nies came in a speech at Birmingham on May 15, 1903, soon after his return from South Africa. The proposal was by no means new, since Mr. Chamberlain had especially desired that the one-shilling corn duty imposed during the Boer War should be continued as the first stage in the preferential treatment of the colonies. By the refusal of Mr. Ritchie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to retain the tax for such a purpose, the stage was set for a definite controversy. Within a period of six months, the issue extended beyond the bounds of a preferential treatment for colonies to a far-reaching tariff-reform programme. With it came the resignation in September of the Colonial Secretary in order that he might spread abroad the message of protection; at the same time there withdrew from the Cabinet Mr. Ritchie, the Duke of Devonshire and other leading free-traders who refused to renounce the free-trade policy of Great Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this study is not concerned with the conflicting views presented by the parties in the fiscal controversy, but rather with the extent to which Chamberlain sought to identify tariff reform with the cause of English social reform. In the first place, it may be definitely stated that the question was fundamentally an imperial issue. At the time of his resignation from the Cabinet, Chamberlain wrote to the Duke of Devonshire: "For my part I care

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 124; Holland, *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, vol. ii, pp. 321-371. In 1896, Chamberlain presented the proposition that an imperial *sollverein* should be established in which there should be free trade throughout the whole empire and duties of some kind against foreign countries. Chamberlain, *Foreign and Colonial Speeches* (London, 1897), p. 173. Later statements of the Colonial Secretary caused the *Spectator* to comment in 1889 that it regretted that Mr. Chamberlain had been drifting into a position of hostility and antagonism towards what they regarded as one of the foundation stones of their national greatness and national strength, the policy of free trade. *Spectator*, vol. 82 (1899), p. 76.

only for the great question of Imperial Unity. Everything else is secondary or consequential.”<sup>1</sup> However, a more tangible appeal than the welfare of the Empire was needed to gain the support of the working class of England; it was necessary to connect the issue intimately with the domestic welfare of the English people. As the movement progressed and the idea of preferential treatment of the colonies developed into full-fledged tariff reform, the social significance of the movement seems to have acquired increased prominence.

Chamberlain declared that the one great social problem the solution of which was dependent upon a return to protection was that of unemployment. Though the army of the unemployed in England had by no means reached the enormous dimensions of the present day, yet as early as the third year of the twentieth century, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was deploring the state of society in which twelve millions of people were underfed and on the verge of hunger.<sup>2</sup> The tariff reformers were not slow in taking up the cry and pointing out to their hearers that the only effectual remedy lay in increased employment. Of all social questions, Mr. Chamberlain asserted, there was none greater, none more promising of valuable result, than the question of how to increase the employment of the working classes. By the figures which he placed before the public, he sought to prove that whereas the import trade was constantly increasing, the export trade was in a condition of stagnation. One by one the industries of the country were declining. “Agriculture, as the greatest of all trades of this country,” he declared, “has been practically destroyed. Sugar has gone; silk has

<sup>1</sup> Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 355; also Boyd, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell-Bannermann cited as his authority for this statement the investigations of Chas. Booth in East London and of Rowntree at York. Spender, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 120.

gone; iron is threatened; wool is threatened; cotton will go." In the light of this situation, he proclaimed to the workingman that it was not only an imperial issue—it was also a question of his employment, of his standard of living, of the prosperity of the trade in which he was engaged.<sup>1</sup> The effect of the movement upon wages was another feature stressed. He reminded the industrial electors of a warning of John Bright to an American manufacturer in 1888 that if he had protection he would have to give higher wages to his workpeople. Through protection, therefore, would come more employment; through increased employment would come higher wages and a better standard of living.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, such statements did not go unchallenged, but the fact remains that it was in this appeal that Chamberlain was making the most direct approach to the working class of England.

In the election campaign of 1906, when one of the shibboleths of the Unionist party was "Tariff Reform means Social Reform", Mr. Chamberlain placed increasing emphasis upon the question of employment and fair wages.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's conviction regarding the urgency of tariff reform must have been strengthened by the Report of the Tariff Commission, a group of experts, organized soon after the question of tariff reform became a political issue. The Commission carried on investigations of the most important of English industries and made extensive reports. In each investigation they gave special attention to existing conditions of employment. As a whole the results showed depression in trade in nearly all industries. The Commission emphasized, in its remedial suggestions, the advisability of the reform of the fiscal policy of England. *Report of Tariff Commission*, 7 vols. (London, 1904-1909).

<sup>2</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 79, 177, 181, 201, 202, 269, 292, 324.

<sup>3</sup> Gretton, Richard H., *A Modern History of the English People*, 2 vols. (London, 1913), vol. ii, p. 255. In the pre-election agitation of 1909, Chamberlain, though far removed from active politics by his illness, sent forth a message stating his belief that in tariff reform would be found the only remedy for unemployment. He presented his policy as the only alternative to budget reform. *Times*, Dec. 17 and 21, 1909.

As an alternative to the various proposals of the Liberal party to promote the welfare of the workingman, he pictured the new era which would be inaugurated when through stimulated industry every man would be able to exercise his right to labour. In an address at East Birmingham, he said:

If there were more employment there would be less drunkenness, for poverty is the cause of drunkenness much more than drunkenness is the cause of poverty. If they could find full and continuous employment at fair wages for all the people in the country that wanted work they would have done more to reduce intemperance and all the other evils of which they complained than by any other course they could possibly take. If the wanting of employment is the evil, what is the remedy? Evidently it is in new and increased markets.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time that the great tariff reformer was seeking to impress upon the labouring man the significance of these proposals in relation to his securing continuous employment at remunerative wages, he also aimed to convince him of the inconsistency of clinging to a policy of *laissez-faire* in trade relationships when so great a departure from that doctrine had been made in the social reform legislation of the last quarter-century. To the trade-unionist he would say: "If protected labour is good . . . then it is good to protect the results of labour." To any believer in the sanctity of *laissez-faire*, he gave the warning: "You must no more interfere to raise the standard of living, to raise the wages of workingmen, than you must interfere to raise the price of goods or the profits of manufactures." Reverting to the history of the Anti-Corn Law movement when a free-trade policy was inaugurated, he reminded his fellow countrymen that the working classes were neither represented

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1906.

nor consulted, but that the movement was one championed and sustained by the manufacturer and middle-class element.<sup>1</sup>

Among the classes of the population that had especially suffered, he believed, by the adoption of a policy of free trade were the farmers and agrarian labourers. He contended that the repeal of the Corn Laws had not stimulated the demand for agricultural labour; instead, it had thrown one-half of the labourers out of employment since much land had either gone out of cultivation or had passed from arable to pasture use. The reason for improvement in the condition of the farm labourer, he held, was not the reduction in the cost of his food, but the development of trade brought about by the progress of invention and by the discovery of gold in Australia and America. By means of import duties, he proposed to bring more land into cultivation, with the result that an increased demand for labour would be created. Towards the successful development of a system of peasant proprietorship with which Unionist policy was so closely identified, Chamberlain also saw the desired stimulus in a protective tariff. He declared that wherever the policy of small holdings had been successful, whether on the Continent or elsewhere, there had always been some kind of protection for agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of a preferential tariff as a means of financing social reform legislation, especially that of old-age pensions, was given some consideration in the early days of the controversy. When Mr. Chamberlain presented his plan of fiscal reform to the House in May, 1903, he bluntly ad-

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 201, 208, 260.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, Aug. 5, 1904, Jan. 5, 1906. Agriculture was one of the subjects investigated by the Tariff Commission, 1903-1909. The Report of the Agricultural Committee was issued in 1906. *Report of the Tariff Commission*, vol. iii.

mitted that it was absolutely essential in carrying out his scheme to put a tax on food. At the same time he recognized the fact that the working classes would pay three-fourths of the tax. So he explained:

That being so, according to my mind, it is a matter of common justice that the working classes are entitled to every penny of the three-fourths; and I would give them without the slightest hesitation the other one-fourth as well, because I have always held . . . that while it would be absolute confiscation to put the cost of social reform wholly on the shoulders of one class, that the richer class, the minority, yet on the other hand it is fair and right that they should make a contribution in return for the indirect advantages they gain from the great prosperity and contentment of the country. Therefore, I should consider that any Government which imposed these duties . . . would have a very large sum of money at their disposal, which they ought to and must devote to social reform. That led me to say the other day that old-age pensions or anything else which cost large sums of money which have hitherto seemed to be out of reach of immediate practical politics, would become practicable if this policy were carried out.<sup>1</sup>

When Mr. Chamberlain's proposal was made a party question, tariff reform was presented by the Unionists as a question to be considered quite apart from that of old-age pensions or any other definite social reform measure. When addressing the Constitutional Club in June, 1903, Chamberlain explained at length his earlier suggestion regarding the use of funds made available by fiscal reform for the benefit of his "favourite hobby", but that he intended it to be considered as nothing more than a suggestion he made emphatic in his concluding words: "That is all I have done, but it has no part whatever in the question of a reform of

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, 4th ser., vol. 122 (1903), p. 1553, vol. 123, p. 186. See also *Times*, June 8, 1903.

our fiscal policy. That is a matter which will come later. When we have the money, then will be the time to say what we shall do with it." A declaration to the same effect was made in November, 1905.<sup>1</sup> Tariff reform henceforth offered no incentives for the advancement of social legislation.

An analysis of Chamberlain, the imperialist, in relation to Chamberlain, the social reformer, discloses clearly one fact — in his mind the domestic progress of the English people was dependent upon the unimpeded growth of British imperial union. Breaking loose from the confining bonds of *laissez-faire* which had been so scrupulously observed by the "Little Englander", he aimed to make clear to his countrymen that imperial unity and development were the indispensable elements to their social welfare, rather than the obstacles which many had believed them to be. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has said that one consistent characteristic runs like a connecting thread through Mr. Chamberlain's life: in his communal consciousness may be found an explanation of his opinion and conduct. In this tribal instinct, the Labour leader saw the underlying motive for Chamberlain's interest in social reform as well as his whole-hearted zeal in the larger field of imperialism.<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, the life of Birmingham's renowned statesman possesses a greater unity and a more far-reaching significance.

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, June 27, 1903, Nov. 4, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, July 7, 1914.



## CHAPTER X

### AN ESTIMATE

To the ardent disciple of the modern school of social reform, Chamberlain's political career in its entirety is unmistakably a disappointment. Mr. J. A. Spender, in recording a conversation which took place in the late 'nineties in a small company where Chamberlain was almost alone among his political opponents, has stated that on that occasion the former Liberal left on those present the impression that he himself considered the latter part of his career to have been but a second-best compared with his early ambitions.<sup>1</sup> Be this as it may, the honest critic must concede that regardless of "what might have been", Birmingham's great municipal reformer and eminent imperialist did fill a place of primary importance in British social politics.

The home influence of a middle-class dissenting family, an educational background which did not include university training and an experience of twenty years in the practical school of business were factors in producing a statesman who could reject without hesitation the revered traditions of the past. His politics came to him, according to his friend, John Morley, from a penetrating observation of things around him as they actually were. "Chamberlain's school was affairs and the demands of circumstances and events."<sup>2</sup> The forcefulness of this fact may be seen in the attitude which he assumed toward the labour legislation that espec-

<sup>1</sup> Milner and Others, *Life of Chamberlain*, pp. 116, 117; Spender, *The Public Life*, vol. i, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, vol. i, pp. 152-156.

ally concerned him as a manufacturer. In such measures as the Ten Hours Act and the Workshops Act of 1867, he recognized opportunities for improving the social welfare of the working class; no selfish interest as a manufacturer nor devotion to an abstract doctrine of political economy entered into his political *credo*.

In marked contrast with this position was that of his friend and colleague, John Bright. Both men were manufacturers, both were classed as Radicals; but in the long struggle for Government regulation of factories, Bright held tenaciously to his belief that any legislative restriction of hours for adult working men was improper interference by the State in the natural relations between the contracting parties. Though this has often been explained by reference to Bright's doctrinaire devotion to the Manchester School, no such doctrinaire devotion is to be detected in his attitude toward the Irish or the English land problem, with which his personal interests as a manufacturer were not identified.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was willing to throw aside all supposed rights or inflexible principles, whether in application to the land or in relation to the factory system which was so directly the outcome of the Industrial Revolution. Without reservation, he accepted the doctrine expressed by Professor Jevons: "The State is justified in passing any law, or even in doing any single act, which, without ulterior consequences, adds to the sum total of its happiness. . . . The liberty of the subject is only the means toward the end. Hence, when it fails to produce the desired result, it may be set aside and other means employed."<sup>2</sup>

Chamberlain's fearlessness in applying this doctrine found full expression during his three-year mayoralty in Birming-

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*, pp. 154-159, 163, 164, 337, 410, 429, 430.

<sup>2</sup> *North American Review*, vol. 152 (1891), p. 547; Jevons, W. Stanley, *The State in Relation to Labour* (London, 1894), pp. 12, 13.

ham. By the wise and liberal use of the powers entrusted to him and his colleagues, a new era of municipal development was inaugurated — the health of the community was given additional protection by the acquisition of the water undertaking and the initiation of the improvement scheme, a better system of education was put into operation, means of education and enjoyment were provided in an effort to equalize social advantages and to secure for all the members of the community those opportunities so long monopolized by the rich alone. The attainment of all these aims was made possible only by desertion of the sacred traditions of the past. In the words of Mr. James L. Garvin, "*Laissez-faire* vanished when he appeared".<sup>1</sup>

With such experience the municipal reformer in 1876 entered the realm of imperial politics. Were his ideals, his aspirations to be merged with those of the Liberal party steeped in its Whig traditions and holding fast to the belief in an individualistic society? That ready submission to things as they were could not be expected from the Birmingham Radical had already been demonstrated to the Liberal leaders in his attitude on the educational question and other phases of Liberal policy. Before the overthrow of the Liberals in 'seventy-four, he had complained that the Government was deaf to the growing desire for radical reform which was occupying the minds of the great mass of the people. In his admiration for the social measures sponsored by Secretary Cross, such as the Artisans' Dwelling Act and the Public Health Act, he boldly announced that in the absence of any definite Liberal policy which would separate Liberals from Conservatives, he was nearer to men like Mr. Cross, Sir Stafford Northcote and Selater Booth, than to Mr. Forster, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Robert Lowe.<sup>2</sup> He might have added to the list the then retired

<sup>1</sup> *National Review*, vol. 49 (1907), p. 854.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, Nov. 25, 1875.

leader of the Liberal party, for surely no one can claim any real sympathy between the ardent economic liberal and the Radical social reformer. Chamberlain in his impatience at Gladstone's indifference to vital problems during the early 'seventies, wrote unapologetically in the *Fortnightly Review*: "When the Prime Minister has had an opportunity of declaring himself on subjects of the deepest interest and importance, he has had as little to tell as Canning's needy knifegrinder."<sup>1</sup> In Gladstone's departure from a policy of *laissez-faire* in attempting to solve the Irish land difficulty, and in his more or less formal sanction of certain Liberal social reform measures during the 'nineties may be traced a breaking away from the tenets of the Manchester School, but it must be recognized that in every case in which he was inspired to such action, the consideration of political expediency was by no means absent. When Chamberlain, however, first became his colleague in Parliament, the compelling forces of party politics had not yet caused Gladstone to swerve far from his path of devotion to economic liberalism.

One may profitably inquire to what extent, during Chamberlain's ten years of association with the Liberal party in Parliament, he was an influence in the cause of social reform among the Liberals. Just as Lord Shaftesbury had inspired the land owners against the manufacturers in overthrowing the doctrines of the old School, so Mr. Chamberlain became the leader of a new school of Radical reform, which emphasized belief not only in thoroughly democratic institutions but also in the use of these institutions for the social welfare of the people. The extension of the franchise and the establishment of local government were merely mediums for the attainment of better educational facilities for all the people, for a readjustment of the inequalities of

<sup>1</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, vol. xx (1873), p. 293.

the land situation, for a more equitable relation between capital and labour, and for the provision of more wholesome living conditions. Whatever decrease in radicalism may be discovered in Chamberlain's actions in later years, the fact remains that during his early parliamentary experiences, culminating in the unauthorized programme of 1885, he was a power among the Liberal masses, and the influence which he left with them became a part of their conception of the Liberal policy of the future. An apt illustration of this abiding influence is found in a critic's comment that Chamberlain was a sort of John the Baptist to Lloyd George; or, of more force may be the admission of the Welsh reformer himself regarding the inspiration he had received from "Joe's speeches".<sup>1</sup>

But the prophecy of some of Chamberlain's admirers—that he would become the great social reform leader of the Liberal party—was never to be fulfilled. From the record of his activities during the decade following the Liberal Unionist secession, however, no one can claim that his labours were entirely in vain. Even when he was a member of the Opposition during the 'seventies, he had been obliged to recognize the commendable efforts of the Conservative Government to promote social welfare. Later, as an ally of his former opponents, he became more fully conscious that to the Tory party was due considerable credit for its efforts throughout the century to ameliorate the conditions produced by the Industrial Revolution.<sup>2</sup> He became conscious that the spirit of humanitarianism which had been inspired by Disraeli was still alive in the Tory democracy, and with determination he set about the task of strengthening its hold and giving it more practical application. Disappointment came in the withdrawal from the governing forces of Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Sewanee Review*, vol. xxv (1917), p. 41. See *supra*, pp. 238, 239.

<sup>2</sup> See Wilkinson, William J., *Tory Democracy* (New York, 1925).

Randolph Churchill, in whom he had placed his highest hopes of cooperation. Nevertheless, he persisted in his efforts; though he found that there were limitations to the progress that he desired to make, yet he succeeded surprisingly well in carrying through his unauthorized programme of 'eighty-five, and thereby contributed in no small degree to the advancement of the social reform policy of the Tory party during the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century.

As has already been seen, his zeal as a purely domestic reformer was merged in that of imperial politics during the closing years of his parliamentary career. But it is significant that whereas he was finding the solution of Britain's most urgent social problems in a reconstruction of her economic policy, the forces still representative of the old Tory democracy were seeking to impress upon the Unionist party the importance of various reforms in which Chamberlain would have taken the keenest interest a decade earlier. The legislative action demanded by Sir John Gorst to remedy evils revealed by the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration of 1903<sup>1</sup> was practically unheeded by the Unionist leaders. They gave no serious consideration to the fact that thousands of under-nourished children were to be found in the United Kingdom, a situation aggravated by the unsuitable dwellings in which the masses were housed. "Tariff Reform means Social Reform" might be made the catch-word of the Unionist party, but to thousands of people in the British Isles it had no meaning. Great, therefore, as one may believe Chamberlain's contributions to the social betterment of England to have been, yet his devotion to tariff reform was one of the factors which operated to overthrow the Unionist party and to restore to power the reconstructed Liberal party. A

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, 1904, vol. 32 [Cd. 2175].

Liberal Government in the twentieth century was to do without Chamberlain what the Birmingham Radical of the eighteen-seventies had hoped a Liberal Government would achieve with him. Chamberlain never fully attained the goal of his early ambitions, but the social politics of his opponents were essentially his, and they triumphed.

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